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# Strategic assessment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

## Special report of the Secretary-General

## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 28 of Security Council resolution 2404 (2018), in which the Council requested me to submit, by the end of November 2018, an assessment of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), including options for a possible reconfiguration of the United Nations presence in the country and reprioritization of tasks.

2. An independent senior expert was hired to conduct a strategic assessment mission in Guinea-Bissau from 28 September to 4 October 2018. A senior representative from the Department of Political Affairs and representatives from the Department of Field Support, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (representing the United Nations Sustainable Development Group), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) were also deployed to support the independent expert. The strategic assessment mission met with many national, regional and international stakeholders in Bissau and Dakar, held discussions with UNIOGBIS staff members and the United Nations country team and visited the UNIOGBIS regional office in Bafatá. The senior expert also undertook separate consultations with high-level officials from the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union.

3. The findings outlined in the present report, while informed by the work carried out by the senior expert and the technical contributions of the United Nations representatives who participated in the strategic assessment mission, are consistent with my assessment of UNIOGBIS. The report includes my recommendations for the reprioritization of tasks and options for the future United Nations presence in the country.

## II. Background

4. The United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS) was established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1233 (1999), in



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the wake of the 1998/99 civil war, as a special political mission headed by a representative of the Secretary-General. In 2009, UNOGBIS had up to 32 staff members, half of whom were international staff.

5. The structure and mandate of the mission have since evolved. Following the serious deterioration of the political situation resulting from the assassinations of the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Batista Tagme Na Waie, and the President of Guinea-Bissau, João Bernardo "Nino" Vieira, on 1 and 2 March 2009, respectively, the Security Council established UNIOGBIS to succeed UNOGBIS as of 1 January 2010, through its resolution 1876 (2009), to be headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General, supported in turn by a Deputy Special Representative, who is also the United Nations resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative, and 119 staff members (including 64 international staff members). Since 2010, UNIOGBIS has consisted of four core substantive units: the Political Affairs Section; the Security Sector Reform Section, which later became the Rule of Law and Security Institutions Section; the Human Rights and Gender Section; and the Public Information Unit, which later became the Information and Strategic Communication Unit. UNIOGBIS also opened permanent field offices (currently three, with one seasonal office), which were each to be staffed by one political affairs officer and one national human rights officer, to support the United Nations country team and provide the basis for activities carried out by the Organization's agencies, funds and programmes in the regions outside the city of Bissau.

6. Following the military coup of April 2012, throughout the transitional phase until the legislative and presidential elections held in 2014 and during the brokering of the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the ECOWAS Road Map for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau and its aftermath, the Security Council approved successive proposals to adjust the configuration and mandate of UNIOGBIS. Proposals for those reconfigurations were prepared pursuant to a technical assessment mission in 2013, a strategic assessment mission in 2014 and a strategic review mission in 2016. In its latest configuration, following the 2016 strategic review mission, the political capacities of UNIOGBIS were strengthened and United Nations integration on the ground was further enhanced, with the Deputy Special Representative mandated to oversee all UNIOGBIS programmatic peacebuilding activities as both United Nations resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative. Under its 2018 budget, UNIOGBIS maintains 142 positions, including 63 international staff members, in addition to 15 uniformed personnel.

7. By its resolution 2404 (2018), the Security Council extended the mandate of UNIOGBIS until 28 February 2019 and requested the mission to focus its efforts on three priorities: (a) supporting the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement and facilitating an inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation process; (b) supporting, through good offices, the electoral process to ensure inclusive, free and credible legislative elections in 2018 within the legally mandated timeframe; and (c) providing support, including technical assistance, to the national authorities with a view to expediting and completing the review of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau. The Council also mandated UNIOGBIS to carry out the following tasks: (a) strengthen democratic institutions and State organs; (b) promote and protect human rights; (c) provide strategic and technical advice and support to the Government to combat drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, in close cooperation with UNODC; (d) incorporate a gender perspective into peacebuilding; and (e) mobilize, harmonize and coordinate international assistance, namely from the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS and the European Union, with a view to upcoming elections. Meanwhile, the three paragraphs outlining the tasks relating to rule of law and security institutions, which had been included in the mandate of the mission since its establishment, were deleted.

# III. Findings of the strategic assessment

## A. Situational analysis

8. To succeed in its overall objective of supporting peace consolidation in Guinea-Bissau, UNIOGBIS requires the presence of a political leadership committed to the consolidation of peace and stability, the strengthening of democracy and the delivery of good and effective governance on the basis of the observance of the rule of law and respect for human rights. Such political will appears to be lacking, as the political process in the country has been marked by coups and counter-coups, the targeted assassination of senior political and military figures and institutional crises generated by personal disagreements among leading figures of the executive branch of Government. Thus, although it has avoided widespread violence, gross human rights violations and a humanitarian crisis, Guinea-Bissau is in a state of chronic political instability, primarily afflicted by longstanding disputes among political elites that have been ineffectively litigated by a politicized judiciary in Bissau.

9. The immediate triggers of the most recent institutional crisis relate to the decision by the President, José Mário Vaz, to dismiss the Prime Minister, Domingos Simões Pereira, in 2015. Mr. Simões Pereira is the leader of the ruling African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde — PAIGC), which had won the largest share of the vote (nearly 48 per cent) during the 2014 legislative elections. In the months that preceded the Prime Minister's ouster, his relationship with the President had deteriorated, as they disagreed significantly on the management of the country, on the use of government funds and on certain Cabinet nominations. The leaders of various PAIGC factions and influential businesspersons excluded from government positions, and consequently from access to State funds, reportedly fuelled the rivalry between the President and the Prime Minister.

10. Between late 2015 and late 2016, the President appointed and dismissed two Prime Ministers who were unable to cobble together a majority in the National Assembly to pass a government programme and the State budget. Ultimately, an ECOWAS-facilitated mediation process led to the adoption of a six-point road map in September 2016 and the signature of the Conakry Agreement on 14 October of the same year. Despite renewed hope for reconciliation and stability, and the international support generated by the Agreement, its implementation was undermined by the inability of the Guinea-Bissau signatories to agree on the implementation of two key provisions: the appointment of a consensus Prime Minister and the modalities for the reintegration of 15 dissident PAIGC parliamentarians back into the party.

11. Despite intense diplomatic efforts by ECOWAS, with support from the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, the European Union and the United Nations, the signatories of the Conakry Agreement did not implement any of its provisions for nearly two years. After repeated calls by ECOWAS for the appointment by the President of a consensus Prime Minister went unheeded, on 4 February 2018, the subregional body imposed targeted sanctions against 19 political stakeholders deemed to be obstructing the implementation of the Agreement. The stigma associated with that action prompted internal dialogue initiatives, facilitated by the Bishop of Bissau, who was assisted through the good offices of Angola and UNIOGBIS.

12. After nearly three years of institutional paralysis, ECOWAS achieved a breakthrough at its extraordinary summit held in Lomé on 14 April 2018. During the summit, President Vaz agreed to appoint Aristides Gomes as Prime Minister and to schedule the next round of parliamentary elections for 18 November 2018. On the

same occasion, the President of the National Assembly pledged to convene a plenary parliamentary session to extend the mandate of the current legislature and nominate the members of the National Electoral Commission. Since then, most key provisions of the Conakry Agreement have been, or are in the process of being, implemented. The 15 expelled PAIGC members have not yet been reintegrated, however, and no stability pact has yet been signed. Some of those expelled have since formed their own political party.

13. At its core, the key drivers of instability in Guinea-Bissau have remained largely unchanged since the previous strategic review mission to the country, deployed in 2016. Those drivers boil down to the following structural factors: a profoundly divided political class, driven by narrowly defined and antagonistic group interests; the growing political influence of a parallel economy based on narcotics trafficking; the absence of the State, especially in rural areas, and the fact that, where present, it is largely ineffective; the generalized lack of respect for the rule of law; violations of human rights and widespread impunity therefor; a general atmosphere of resignation with regard to poverty; and lack of access to basic services. In addition, there are increasingly worrisome signs of the presence of operatives of extremist networks from the Sahel and elsewhere in Guinea-Bissau.

## B. The role of international partners

14. Over the years, UNIOGBIS has built a solid platform for cooperation with the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, ECOWAS and the European Union, as well as with bilateral partners of Guinea-Bissau. Collectively, those partners have remained actively engaged with Guinea-Bissau stakeholders and supportive of national reform agendas. International partners, however, have expressed frustration with the slow progress of reforms and what they perceive as a limited sense of ownership and responsibility among national counterparts. The protracted institutional paralysis that lasted from 2015 to early 2018 has not helped to dispel such concerns.

15. At the political level, ECOWAS engagement with the country has been recurring and multifaceted, through its liaison office in Bissau, the regular deployment of its ministerial follow-up committee and joint and individual initiatives led by the ECOWAS Mediator for Guinea-Bissau and the Chairpersons of the ECOWAS Authority. ECOWAS also continues to contribute to security through its peace operation, the ECOWAS mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), which protects government institutions and political leaders. Since the deployment of ECOMIB in 2012, the country's military has maintained a republican stance, according to its constitutionally prescribed role. There have been no political assassinations or incidents of serious violence, and the salutary effect of ECOMIB as a deterrent is widely recognized.

16. Current international assistance has been focused on the provision of technical, financial and material support towards the organization of credible legislative elections in 2018. Preparations for elections are underway, although their organization, like all other electoral processes in Guinea-Bissau, has faced several challenges. At the same time, there is no guarantee that elections will be a panacea to the problems affecting the country. The solution may lie in the review of the Constitution to clarify the division of labour between the two branches of Government.

# IV. Assessment of the United Nations presence in Guinea-Bissau

## A. The role of UNIOGBIS

17. The presence of UNIOGBIS is unanimously valued by the Government, civil society and international partners on the ground. One interlocutor stated that UNIOGBIS had played a critical preventive role and that without it, the situation in Guinea-Bissau could have been much worse. Interlocutors also unanimously asserted that, in the immediate future and during the politically sensitive electoral cycle expected to last through mid-2019, the joint presence of the mission and ECOMIB was critical, as that presence was expected to continue to have a dissuasive effect on potential spoilers. Many interlocutors, however, have called for a lighter United Nations political footprint in the country after the electoral cycle and a greater emphasis of international assistance on economic and social development.

18. Beyond its important preventive role, through the good offices and political mediation of my Special Representative, UNIOGBIS has also had a significant positive impact on the development and strengthening of the capacities of civil society organizations, in particular women's groups that had played a key role in generating the political will that led to the compromise agreed to in Conakry. UNIOGBIS also provided critical support to the members of the organizing commission on the national conference on reconciliation, enabling them to better mobilize national and international attention and resources to reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts.

19. UNIOGBIS has engaged with a broad range of national stakeholders who were parties to the political and institutional crisis, in order to facilitate sustained, constructive dialogue and the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement. UNIOGBIS engaged with ECOWAS, the European Union and the African Union in Bissau, as well as the wider diplomatic community, to mobilize their support and generate collective pressure for the implementation of the Agreement. The mission's efforts included regular consultations and good offices with national political stakeholders, the provision of financial and logistical support to ECOWAS high-level missions to Guinea-Bissau and the participation of Guinea-Bissau stakeholders at ECOWAS summits. However, UNIOGBIS could further strengthen its engagement as the convener of meetings of the "Guinea-Bissau P5" group, which consists of the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries, ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations.

20. Since April 2018, there have been modest signs of progress towards a national commitment to countering drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. Government interlocutors acknowledged the scope of the problem and the role of some military and security chiefs in the drug trade. Some interlocutors suggested that other actors, beyond those in the military and security forces, were also involved with drug trafficking networks, which further undermined government efforts against this scourge. Still other interlocutors emphasized that the issue had a subregional dimension, which would require a concomitant response and which should be given the highest priority on the political and security agendas of ECOWAS, and that more focus should be placed on the origin of the trade. In a context where powerful implicated parties do not want effective State institutions, however, UNIOGBIS and United Nations country team efforts to counter drug trafficking and transnational organized crime are unlikely to bear the desired results.

21. In terms of priorities for UNIOGBIS, interlocutors frequently cited reforms of the security, justice and public administration sectors and the continued work of the mission's gender and human rights components. Drug trafficking and growing religious extremism were also identified as areas of concern on which the United

Nations, as a whole, should focus. Any effort by UNIOGBIS and other international partners with regard to those priorities will not succeed, however, in the absence of strong political will and a sense of ownership on the part of the national authorities.

## B. The United Nations country team

22. The United Nations country team consists of 16 agencies, funds and programmes, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. United Nations country team activities are anchored in the Partnership Framework between Guinea-Bissau and the United Nations for the period 2016–2020, which has a total budget of $341 million. The Framework supports the implementation of the national priorities articulated in the national development plan, "Terra Ranka", for the period 2015–2020, which is focused on economic growth and poverty reduction, human development, sustainable resources management and strengthening the rule of law and governance. The impact of the Framework to date has been limited.

23. By 2017, Guinea-Bissau had made progress in achieving some of the Sustainable Development Goals, such as lowering the child mortality rate and expanding primary education and environmental protections. Still, the country currently ranks 177th out of 189 countries on the human development index (HDI), with an index value of 0.455. Almost 70 per cent of the population is defined as living on the poverty line (under $2 a day) and over one third is extremely poor (living below $1 a day). The quality and availability of health services remain among the country's major problems, as evidenced by the low level of mean life expectancy, estimated at only 57.8 years of age in 2017. Human development in the country remains precarious, largely owing to the low allocation of budgetary resources for the education and health sectors, at 8.2 per cent (2.1 per cent of the gross domestic product) and 6.1 per cent (1.6 per cent of the gross domestic product), respectively, of the 2018 State budget.

24. While Guinea-Bissau is not a participant in the "Delivering as one" pilot programme, the Government and the United Nations country team are committed to gradually reinforcing the operationalization of that approach. The Partnership Framework facilitates the connection between UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team. UNIOGBIS co-chairs the Framework outcome group on rule of law and governance. The United Nations has one joint programme, on police, justice and corrections, implemented by UNDP, UNIOGBIS, OHCHR, UNODC, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). The total budget of the joint programme is $25 million over three years. Since the changes to the mandate of UNIOGBIS introduced in resolution 2404 (2018), the components on police and corrections have been dormant, and UNDP has been focusing on justice.

25. The situation in Guinea-Bissau is on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission, and the Peacebuilding Fund has been a strong supporter of the country. Since 2008, the Fund has allocated $40 million to peacebuilding programmes there. Its current portfolio consists of six projects under the Immediate Response Facility, valued at close to $7.5 million over 18 months. The United Nations entities involved are UNDP, UNICEF, UNIOGBIS, UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the International Organization for Migration.

## C. Challenges

26. The main challenges encountered by UNIOGBIS in delivering on resolution 2404 (2018) are outlined below.

### 1. Limited political will

27. Strong national political will for stability is a precondition to achieving progress towards sustainable peace, stability and development in Guinea-Bissau. It constitutes the key factor that will allow the various political forces to place the interests of the nation above their competing group interests, agree on the fundamentals and develop a common vision for the present and the future of the country. Importantly, it will also create an environment conducive to maximizing the impact of the international community's multifaceted assistance, including the efforts of the United Nations in the country. However, limited and inconsistent political will among national stakeholders has regularly stalled progress in the implementation of the institutional reforms cited in the Conakry Agreement. According to the Agreement, those reforms should be implemented prior to the holding of elections, but political negotiations and technical preparations for the implementation of the reforms have been upstaged by electoral manoeuvring.

### 2. Limited absorption capacities

28. Existing national capacities in terms of institutional and physical infrastructure and trained human resources are very low. That situation, compounded by recurring political and institutional instability, negatively affects the country's capacity to absorb technical and financial support delivered by international partners and limits the potentially positive impact of such support.

29. The United Nations has frequently organized training sessions and workshops to strengthen the capacities of national counterparts in public institutions. However, such activities are often implemented in an uncoordinated way, with no link to broader human resources policies and without prior capacity needs assessments. Furthermore, attendance at capacity-building training sessions, conferences and workshops may often be motivated by the prospect of receiving daily subsistence or transportation allowances, which are provided almost systematically to participants in events organized by the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau and which may have contributed to a culture characterized by a "cash-for-workshop" mentality.

### 3. Long-term dependency on the mission

30. The work carried out by UNIOGBIS, operating at a strategic level, coordinating the representatives of the international community in the country and acting as a deterrent to spoilers, has been extremely valuable. Nevertheless, its presence may also have contributed to a reduced sense of ownership of the political process among the leaders of Guinea-Bissau and of their responsibility to move the country forward.

### 4. Limited United Nations integration

31. The instruments for integration are formally in place but need to be fully utilized to promote coherence across the United Nations presence in Guinea-Bissau. Coordination mechanisms should be used not only for information exchange, but also for strategic and joint planning and for assessment purposes.

### 5. Underutilized regional presence and programmes

32. Ongoing difficulties in implementing reforms at the national level and the persistent disengagement of governing institutions in Bissau with local communities in the regions may indicate a need to shift investments to the local level to build capacities from the bottom up. The mission's regional presence (Bafatá, Buba, Bubaque and São Domingos) had previously been focused on tasks relating to rule of law and security institutions, combined with a public information component and, in

Bafatá, a political affairs component that played a role in community-level engagement. While the mission may have intended to refocus the efforts of its regional offices on political analysis and engagement with regional and local authorities, the regional offices appear to be underutilized by both UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team. Moreover, the locations of UNIOGBIS regional offices are not in areas where UNDP, for example, operates. In addition, operating costs for such regional offices are very high.

## V. Reprioritization of tasks and reconfiguration of the United Nations presence in Guinea-Bissau

33. Since the end of the civil war in 1999, there has been no widespread violence in Guinea-Bissau, nor have there been any humanitarian emergencies or systematic gross violations of human rights. Nevertheless, the country has been in a state of chronic political instability that tends to become even more volatile during elections. As the country enters a new electoral period, which is expected to last through mid-2019, both UNIOGBIS and ECOMIB are perceived as having a dissuasive effect on spoilers. While all interlocutors urged UNIOGBIS to remain in Guinea-Bissau, at least until the end of the present electoral cycle, they also recommended that United Nations support after the elections be focused on increased development assistance and capacity-building, including the creation of conditions conducive to implementing the broader reform agenda.

34. Assuming that legislative elections, although delayed, do take place and political tensions do not reach crisis proportions, a reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS and a reprioritization of its tasks should be considered, to reflect a more coherent, nimble and effective peace and security pillar aligned more closely with the development and human rights pillars. On the basis of that assumption, I would recommend three phases of intervention, during which the United Nations would focus on good offices and the coordination of international partners. The United Nations presence would also implement tasks relating to the protection of human rights; to combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, in close cooperation with UNODC; and to the provision of support to the Government to incorporate a gender perspective into peacebuilding, with varying degrees of emphasis. The three phases of United Nations engagement are outlined in greater detail below.

### A. Phase I: electoral phase (until June 2019)

35. During phase I, UNIOGBIS would remain as currently configured and prioritize support for the holding of legislative and presidential elections. Its activities would entail increased good offices with national actors and political support to and coordination with ECOWAS and the other members of the Guinea-Bissau P5 group. Other components of UNIOGBIS would be geared towards providing support to the overall good offices function of the mission. They would also help to support technical-level coordination with the Guinea-Bissau P5 group.

### B. Phase II: immediate post-electoral phase (June–December 2019)

36. The United Nations presence should be focused on the establishment of conditions conducive for the implementation of the reform agenda. That approach should include preparations for the UNIOGBIS transition plan, which would be linked to the development of the new Partnership Framework, in coordination with national authorities and international partners. The other components of the United Nations

presence would promote a "good offices for good governance" approach and provide strategic advice and support to the Government for the strengthening of democratic institutions. Further guidance on the specific focus of programmatic engagement, including potentially prioritizing local and regional engagement if adequate entry points exist, should be provided in the context of an integrated transition strategy. The latter should be informed by the recommendations contained in the present report, by the UNDP mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support strategy, which will be aimed at identifying priorities to help the country to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and by a mapping of the United Nations country team's capacities to deliver adequate programmatic support.

### C. Phase III: transition and exit (no later than 31 December 2020)

37. Phase III would entail the implementation of the transition plan defined during phase II and the gradual transfer of tasks from UNIOGBIS to the United Nations country team, UNOWAS and international partners. More broadly, investments in strengthening the capacity of citizens to engage with public institutions and the Government on peacebuilding, reconciliation, governance and economic development issues should continue. Consideration should also be given to increasing the capacities of the United Nations presence to design and implement peacebuilding programmes focused on civil society and grass-roots organizations.

38. The reconfiguration of UNIOGBIS should take place after the completion of the electoral cycle, namely, as of phase II. I recommend establishing a streamlined good offices special political mission in Bissau, focused on facilitating the political process and led by a special representative at the assistant secretary-general level. To facilitate the implementation of this recommendation, an integrated component could be established to help to incrementally build up the capacity of the United Nations country team, while gradually drawing down the mission until its final exit no later than 31 December 2020. I would also recommend that the UNIOGBIS drawdown, initiated pursuant to Security Council resolution 2404 (2018), commence with the immediate closure of its regional offices.

## VI. Conclusion

39. I welcomed the opportunity to assess UNIOGBIS at the request of the Security Council. Support for the electoral process remains a key priority for the United Nations, in line with Security Council resolution 2404 (2018). While progress has been made by the State authorities since the resolution was adopted in February 2018, maintaining the current strength and mandate of UNIOGBIS until June 2019 will ensure that the mission has the full capacity to support the electoral process, including by providing good offices to national actors and coordinating efforts with the Guinea-Bissau P5 group.

40. Considering the significant investment that the United Nations has made in Guinea-Bissau, including through the presence of a political mission for two decades, it is imperative to ensure that the UNIOGBIS exit process is managed in a way that would help to maintain the gains achieved thus far. I believe that the best way to meet this goal is to establish a streamlined good offices special political mission following the end of the electoral cycle. Such a "streamlined UNIOGBIS" would prepare a transition plan that would clearly identify the programmatic tasks to be handed over to the United Nations country team and the timing for doing so. Moreover, the transition plan would be prepared in close collaboration with the national authorities,

the United Nations country team and international partners, thereby ensuring full ownership by all stakeholders.

41. Given the key role of ECOWAS in support of the political process in Guinea-Bissau, and considering the mandate of UNOWAS, I have requested my Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel to increase the engagement of the UNOWAS regional office in Guinea-Bissau. In that regard, UNOWAS will work together with UNIOGBIS to ensure that ECOWAS and individual regional leaders keep the situation in Guinea-Bissau on their agendas, not only during the critical electoral period, but also beyond that period, when the country will need assistance from the international community to implement a reform agenda. UNOWAS will also help to promote more prominent discussions within ECOWAS on regional issues of importance for Guinea-Bissau, such as drug trafficking and transnational organized crime. Upon the exit of UNIOGBIS, UNOWAS would take over the good offices functions.

42. In a context of economic austerity, it will be important for the United Nations to remain engaged in Guinea-Bissau, throughout the transition and exit phase and beyond, to help to mobilize the international community in support of the institutional reform agenda. In that regard, the role of the Peacebuilding Commission will be indispensable. The United Nations could also invest in better aid coordination and resource mobilization capacities in Guinea-Bissau. That would dovetail with the expected reinvigoration of the role and capacities of the office of the resident coordinator, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/279.

43. I would like to express my gratitude to the senior expert, João Honwana, for leading the assessment and to my Special Representative for Guinea-Bissau and Head of UNIOGBIS, José Viegas Filho, for his leadership of the mission, as well as to all United Nations personnel in Guinea-Bissau for their support for and participation in the process. I would also like to thank all interlocutors who provided their views on the role of UNIOGBIS. In developing my recommendations, consideration was given to the priorities of Guinea-Bissau stakeholders and to the concerns of regional and international partners. Looking ahead, the ongoing partnership between the Government and the United Nations, in whatever form that may take on the ground, will be crucial to ensuring the support of the international community for peacebuilding and the implementation of key reforms in Guinea-Bissau.

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# Letter dated 5 December 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Peru and Sweden, as co-chairs of the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security, and in close cooperation with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, hereby transmit a summary of the meeting held on 18 October 2018 on the situation in the Central African Republic (see annex).

We would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gustavo **Meza-Cuadra**
Permanent Representative of Peru to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Olof **Skoog**
Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Karen **Pierce**
Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations

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## Annex to the letter dated 5 December 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Peru, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

## Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security

### Summary of the meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic, 18 October 2018

On 18 October 2018, the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security held a meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic. The members received a briefing from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, experts from the Mission and representatives of the United Nations country team. The Special Representative provided a comprehensive overview of key developments since the previous meeting and of progress and challenges in implementing commitments with regard to women and peace and security.

Members of the Security Council asked questions about the participation of women in the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, the use of the recommendations of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in the current talks, the visit of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic, the financial needs of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children, the ongoing work of MINUSCA to support the participation of women as candidates and voters in the 2020 and 2021 elections, the capacity of the Mission and the country team to report effectively on conflict-related sexual violence and the impact of insecurity, poverty and human rights violations on women, in particular on the access of girls to education. Several Council members asked for specific details about the exchanges of the United Nations with the Government regarding the current lack of participation of women in the African Initiative and the need to go beyond plans to include them as observers. Below are the main points raised in the briefing and during the meeting:

- The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic is moving forward with increasing momentum, but more must be done to ensure the participation of women, a central point made not only in previous resolutions and statements by the Security Council, but also during the visit by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Bintou Keita, in June 2018 and the solidarity visit led by the African Union Network of African Women in Conflict Prevention and Mediation (FemWise-Africa), the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in August. The panel of facilitators has asked the parties to ensure that civil society organizations, in particular women's civil society organizations, are invited as observers to the direct talks between the Government and the armed groups. Several actors, including political parties, national authorities and international partners, have promised to ensure the meaningful inclusion of women in the consultations ahead of the talks. The Community of Sant'Egidio has organized a series of mediation training courses for women leaders, and local women's groups have organized workshops to raise awareness among their communities of the African Initiative. In addition, the African Women Leaders Network

launched a national chapter in the Central African Republic in July, bringing together women leaders from civil society, the security sector and public administration. Women leaders and women's civil society organizations in Bangui and the provinces continue to play an important role in conflict prevention, resolution and reconciliation at the local level, engaging directly with armed groups to urge them to lay down their arms and stop their attacks on civilians.

- Women make up only 14 per cent of ministers, 8.5 per cent of the National Assembly, 8.3 per cent of the High Court of Justice, 22 per cent of the national Economic and Social Council, 17.3 per cent of the civil service and 9 per cent of prefects and sub-prefects. The Government has adopted a law establishing that a minimum 35 per cent of elected and nominated positions in Government must be occupied by women, but a presidential decree needs to be signed for its implementation. The decree has now been drafted and validated and is ready for approval by the Council of Ministers. Some recent proposed revisions to the electoral code that are awaiting formal adoption should also eliminate barriers to the participation of women in the forthcoming elections. Since April, a group of women leaders have been lobbying for these revisions and presidential decrees in various activities supported by MINUSCA, UN-Women, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Development Programme, with funds from the Peacebuilding Fund and in partnership with the relevant government ministries.

- Human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law have significantly increased, including in areas that until recently had enjoyed relative stability. Insecurity, high levels of poverty and limited access to basic services continue to severely affect the well-being of women and their socioeconomic opportunities. For example, school enrolment rates for girls have decreased. Violence against women and girls remains a constant threat, and 177 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence have been recorded since the previous briefing, affecting 140 women and 85 girls. Such incidents often involve multiple victims and multiple perpetrators.

- A national strategy to combat gender-based violence (2018–2021) was adopted in November 2017. In September 2018, after one year of operations of the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children, the United Nations organized a workshop to take stock of the unit's achievements. More than 350 cases have been registered with the unit, and demand is high for its services, exceeding its current capacity. Five United Nations police officers are co-located with the national police and gendarmerie in the joint rapid response unit. Nine of the unit's 30 staff members are women. However, although the unit has a national mandate, it can operate only in Bangui, and staff retention is very low. Most importantly, none of the registered cases have been followed up with indictments or trials. The six international magistrates of the Special Criminal Court include three women, but all the national magistrates are men. A national network for the protection of victims and witnesses of sexual and gender-based violence, in particular conflict-related sexual violence, is being established. The working group of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence meets on a monthly basis to exchange information and decide on interventions.

- Women make up approximately only 20 per cent of beneficiaries of community violence reduction and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration projects and 40 per cent of beneficiaries of stabilization programmes.

- Although MINUSCA has developed a Mission-specific gender parity strategy, women make up 24 per cent of total staff, including 29 per cent of international staff, 17 per cent of national staff and 20 per cent of senior management. Furthermore, the strategy does not include uniformed personnel and there are multiple barriers to its implementation.

UN-Women, as the secretariat of the Informal Expert Group, and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict read out some of the recommendations highlighted in the background brief shared with the participants. They included:

- In the forthcoming resolution on the Central African Republic, the Security Council should maintain and expand upon the gender-related elements of its resolution 2387 (2017). In particular, it should express alarm about the lack of representation and influence of women in national decision-making structures and the African Initiative, and underline the importance of the participation of women in the peace process and related consultations, the local peace committees established by the Ministry of National Reconciliation, the forthcoming elections and the implementation of the national recovery and peacebuilding plan, as well as in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, community violence reduction and transitional justice.

- The Security Council or individual Council members should encourage the Government of the Central African Republic to update its national action plan on women and peace and security. The Government should work with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to update their joint communiqué and time-bound commitments, and non-State actors should be urged to make similar commitments.

- The Security Council should urge national authorities to provide the joint rapid response unit to prevent sexual violence against women and children with sustainable and operational support, including a dedicated budget, and ensure that its cases are followed up through the judicial chain, working in collaboration with the prosecutor of the Special Criminal Court.

- The co-chairs of the Independent Expert Group should request the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African Republic to provide an informal update on the implementation of resolution 2399 (2018). The Committee, which now has exemplary language on sexual and gender-based violence, should consider listing ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka commanders for these violations.

The co-chairs closed the meeting, thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, MINUSCA and the country team for their participation, and committed themselves to follow up on the recommendations.

United Nations S/2018/1088

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# United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

## Report of the Secretary-General

## I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) for the period from 15 September 2018 to 20 November 2018, pursuant to the mandate set out in Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and extended in subsequent Council resolutions, most recently resolution 2426 (2018).

## II. Situation in the area of operations and activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

2. During the reporting period, the ceasefire between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic was maintained notwithstanding a number of violations of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian Forces (Disengagement of Forces Agreement) of 1974, which are set out below. Following the cessation of conflict and the regaining of control in August 2018 by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic of parts of the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side that had previously been under the control of various non-State armed groups, the security situation in the UNDOF area of operation remained calm. There was a low level of military activity owing to controlled detonations of explosive ordnance as part of clearance of remnants of war conducted by Syrian security forces. UNDOF personnel also heard single shots from small arms in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side on a daily basis. As underscored again by the Security Council in its resolution 2426 (2018), there should be no military activity of any kind in the area of operations.

3. In employing its best efforts to maintain the ceasefire and see that it is scrupulously observed, as prescribed in the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, UNDOF reports all breaches of the ceasefire line that it observes. All incidents of firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line, as well as the crossing of the ceasefire line by individuals, are violations of the Agreement. In its regular interaction with both sides, the leadership of UNDOF continued to call upon both parties to exercise restraint and prevent any miscalculation that might lead to an escalation of the situation.

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4. During the reporting period, UNDOF observed an increase in the presence of Syrian armed forces in the area of separation. UNDOF observed the daily presence of military personnel, some of whom were armed, staffing a number of checkpoints within the area of separation, including in the vicinity of Ba'th and Khan Arnabah, as well as along the main road connecting Qunaytirah to Damascus. New checkpoints were established close to the Qunaytirah crossing and also in the southern parts of the area of separation. UNDOF also noted the occasional temporary presence of military police of the Russian Federation in the area of separation.

5. On 11 November, United Nations personnel at observation post 51 saw two Israel Defense Forces soldiers fire six shots from small arms and three smoke rounds into the area of separation in the direction of Qahtaniyah.

6. The military violations on the Alpha side (Israeli-occupied Golan) included the presence of 155-mm artillery pieces within 10 km of the ceasefire line. In addition, missile carriers, which are considered unauthorized military equipment in the area of limitation pursuant to the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, were observed within the 25 km zone of the area of limitation.

7. UNDOF observed the daily crossing of the ceasefire line by unidentified individuals from the Bravo side. UNDOF assessed that these individuals were shepherds and farmers tending livestock in the surrounding area. The number of individuals crossing the ceasefire line in the southern part of the area of separation decreased after the Israel Defense Forces closed the hospital that previously had been providing humanitarian assistance to individuals from the Bravo side.

8. UNDOF protested to the parties all violations of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement that it had observed, including the crossing of the ceasefire line by civilians from the Bravo side, the presence of unauthorized equipment and personnel in the area of separation and the firing into the area of separation and across the ceasefire line.

9. During the reporting period, UNDOF did not observe any internally displaced persons or tents in the area of separation. UNDOF was still not in a position to facilitate humanitarian crossings between the two sides, including for students, in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross. With the reopening on 15 October of the crossing point at Qunaytirah between the Alpha and Bravo sides, which was closed in August 2014 when the security situation in the UNDOF area of operation deteriorated, the Mission stands ready to facilitate such crossings with the agreement of the Israeli and Syrian authorities.

10. Sporadic heavy explosions and bursts of heavy machine gun and small arms fire persisted throughout the reporting period in the northern, central and southern parts of the UNDOF areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. On 3 August, UNDOF personnel in Camp Faouar heard approximately 10 bursts of small arms fire 1 km north-west of the Camp. One stray bullet pierced the ceiling of a prefabricated block in Camp Faouar and hit an UNDOF soldier in the knee, causing minor injury. Two more stray bullets were found in a parking area in the Camp. On 11 October, UNDOF personnel in Camp Faouar heard about 80 bursts of heavy machine gun and small arms fire 1 1/2 km south-west of the Camp. Around the same time, a stray bullet pierced the ceiling of a prefabricated block in the Camp, ricocheted and hit an UNDOF peacekeeper, injuring him lightly. UNDOF was not in a position to determine the target of the firing of the shots. Syrian armed forces conducted daily detonations of unexploded ordnance and other remnants of war in the areas of separation and limitation on the Bravo side. According to open sources, there were recent discoveries of substantial weapons caches left by various armed groups on the Bravo side. UNDOF was not in a position to confirm the presence of any armed groups or weapons caches.

11. Since its temporary relocation from a number of its positions in the area of separation in September 2014, and pending its full return to operations on the Bravo side, UNDOF continued to maintain visibility, albeit limited, of the area of separation and the ceasefire line from its positions on Mount Hermon, Camp Faouar, position 80, in the southern part of the area of separation, and position 22, on the Alpha side. UNDOF operations continued to be supported by the military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in Observer Group Golan, who are under the operational control of UNDOF and have maintained five fixed and three temporary observation posts along the ceasefire line, as well as four temporary observation posts on Mount Hermon. On 30 October, Observer Group Golan established temporary observation posts in the vicinity of vacated observation posts 56, 71 and 72. Observer Group Golan will not be deployed at observation posts in the area of separation on a permanent basis until such time as the security conditions permit, when adequate accommodation and appropriate force protection measures are in place. The focus of Observer Group Golan has been on continuous static observation and situational awareness.

12. Through Observer Group Golan, UNDOF continued to carry out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the area of limitation on the Alpha side. Liaison officers from the Alpha side accompanied the inspection teams. Inspections in the area of limitation on the Bravo side were suspended because of the security situation and did not resume.

13. Engagement between UNDOF and the Israel Defense Forces continued, with a view to addressing restrictions on movement and access to United Nations positions in the area of separation and to reduce the delays and challenges experienced by United Nations personnel in crossing the technical fence to observation posts and positions. The Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNDOF continued to remind the parties of their obligation to scrupulously abide by the terms of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the ground, and to extend all cooperation to UNDOF in the fulfilment of the tasks under its mandate.

14. UNDOF, in consultation with both parties, continued to review the situation in the area of separation in order to assess whether the conditions on the ground would permit the return to vacated positions in the area of separation.

15. Since the resumption of patrolling on the Bravo side in February 2018, UNDOF has conducted more than 80 operational patrols on routes in the northern and central parts of the areas of separation and limitation. In addition, UNDOF also carried out assessment visits to different parts of the area of separation. The UNDOF mechanized infantry company and force reserve company conducted route reconnaissance to observation posts 56, 71 and 72 and positions 10, 16, 32 and 80. It is envisaged that UNDOF will include protected patrols to positions 37 and 85, and observation posts 57 and 58, in the near future. Liaison officers of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic accompanied UNDOF personnel on all patrols and assessment visits.

16. On 12 and 13 September, UNDOF personnel conducted clearance of mines, unexploded ordnance and remnants of war from the area at the Bravo gate and the Charlie gate at the Qunaytirah crossing. The UNDOF force reserve company verified the clearance of the area to ensure that the conditions at the crossing were safe for the use of United Nations personnel. With the support of the parties, the Alpha, Bravo and Charlie gates at the crossing were reopened on 15 October. The crossing became functional for UNDOF operational activities between the two sides on 17 October. UNDOF deployed its military police to the Charlie gate, which is situated between the Alpha and the Bravo gates, as well as at the Alpha and Bravo gates, to liaise with the respective sides on UNDOF personnel crossings.

17. During the reporting period, UNDOF continued to make progress towards the limited return to Bravo side operations, in line with the phased UNDOF plan (see S/2018/867). Pursuant to phase 2 of the plan, UNDOF continued to develop the infrastructure of and improve the living conditions at Camp Faouar.

18. On 22 and 23 October, UNDOF conducted a search and clearance operation of United Nations position 32 in order to remove potential hazards such as explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnance. The operation did not unearth any hazards at the position and verified that conditions there were safe for the operations of United Nations personnel. In addition, also on 23 October, a platoon of the UNDOF mechanized infantry company commenced a limited reoccupation of position 32 to support engineering work related to the refurbishment of the facilities and of the security infrastructure at the position.

19. UNDOF assessed that there was a significant threat to United Nations personnel in the UNDOF area of operation from unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and mines, and from the possible presence of "sleeper cells" of armed groups, including listed terrorist groups, particularly in the southern part of the area of separation. UNDOF continued to assess the security situation in the southern part of the area of separation and to ascertain the capabilities that would be appropriate for deployment in that area, conditions permitting. On 18 October and 15 November, UNDOF conducted route reconnaissance patrols to positions 80 and 85 through the area of separation. These routes were assessed to be viable and in sufficiently good condition for future use by UNDOF vehicles, in particular for heavy vehicles, thus providing the Mission with the capability to reinforce and sustain the positions from the area of separation.

20. In accordance with the provisions of Council resolution 2426 (2018) and the UNDOF operational concept, UNDOF continued its efforts to deploy appropriate technology to ensure the safety and security of UNDOF personnel and equipment. A surveillance trailer remained deployed on the Alpha side at Camp Ziouani and position 22, while another was maintained at Camp Faouar.

21. UNDOF continued to resupply its positions on Mount Hermon and at Camp Faouar from Damascus. UNDOF convoys between Damascus and the United Nations positions were conducted almost daily, using main supply route 7 and Salam highway, with an UNDOF security escort and accompanied by a liaison officer from the office of the Senior Syrian Arab Delegate. UNDOF continuously monitored the situation and took the necessary precautionary measures in planning and conducting its convoys. UNDOF continued to conduct and update its contingency planning for the reinforcement and evacuation of United Nations positions and observation posts on both the Alpha and Bravo sides, as well as in Damascus. UNDOF conducted regular rehearsals, exercises and training for identified contingencies. Risk mitigation measures, including force protection measures, continued to be developed at observation posts, positions and operational bases at Camp Ziouani and Camp Faouar.

22. In line with the comprehensive review of United Nations peacekeeping operations, an independent review of UNDOF was undertaken in September and October 2018. The independent review assessed the assumptions that underpin the mandate of the Mission prescribed by the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and its protocol, and the conditions for its successful implementation. The review considered opportunities for improved performance of the Mission as it continues to return gradually to full operations on the Bravo side. A number of conclusions were made in the review, with the key findings and recommendations outlined below.

23. The review team noted the importance of the liaison maintained by UNDOF with the Israel Defense Forces and the Syrian authorities on a regular basis and during times of crisis. In the absence of a formal mechanism to interact with both parties at

the same time, UNDOF played a crucial role in conveying messages between the two sides. That was seen to have contributed, on a number of occasions, to clarifying misunderstandings and de-escalating tensions between the parties. The team also found that it was important for UNDOF, in consultation with the parties, to explore opportunities to enhance liaison with them to ensure compliance with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The team recommended that the engagement of UNDOF with both parties should be strengthened to ensure that they abided fully by the terms of the Disengagement Agreement.

24. The review team found that, while there had been a reduction in tension between the parties in the UNDOF area of operation, the parties continued to violate the ceasefire outside the UNDOF area of operation and that UNDOF was limited in its ability to influence such developments. In that context, it was recommended that UNDOF should explore opportunities to engage further with the parties in an effort to build confidence and trust between them. In addition, the review recommended that the Security Council review and consider addressing the violations by the parties of the ceasefire outside the UNDOF area of operation, and that the Council and relevant Member States urge the parties to avoid misunderstandings and any breaches of the ceasefire.

25. Despite the improvement in the security situation in the UNDOF area of operation, the review noted that the possible presence of "sleeper cells" of armed groups, including listed terrorist groups, unexploded ordnance and remnants of war posed risk to UNDOF personnel. The review team saw the rapid change in the security situation in the area of separation as an opportunity for UNDOF to advance its plan to return gradually to the area in order to improve its visibility of the area of separation and the ceasefire line. It highlighted that the reopening of the crossing point at Qunaytirah, which subsequently occurred on 15 October (see para. 16), should be achieved in the shortest time possible to facilitate effective and efficient mandate implementation. In that regard, the review team found that the gradual return to full UNDOF operations would require additional capabilities, including new technology for observation, force protection, an upgraded vehicle fleet and significant reconstruction of select vacated UNDOF positions, as well as appropriate configuration of operational capacities and streamlined processes. In addition, it found that UNDOF would need to carry out a broad range of activities and, thus, had to identify and prioritize United Nations positions for its immediate return. That would be guided by the value of each position in terms of visibility of the area of separation and the ceasefire line, and the risk mitigation measures and resources required.

26. It was proposed that synergy between UNDOF and other United Nations entities in the region working on common goals should be enhanced and that the relationship between UNDOF and UNTSO regarding UNTSO military observers serving in Observer Group Golan be clarified further.

27. Noting the challenges that UNDOF had faced in July 2018, when internally displaced persons had sought assistance at UNDOF positions in the area of separation, the review team proposed that UNDOF and United Nations Headquarters seek arrangements with the parties and the United Nations country team in the event that similar situations arose in the future. The review team also recommended that UNDOF, in consultation with the parties, consider resuming the civil affairs activities it conducted before the security situation deteriorated in the UNDOF area of operation.

28. The Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, in coordination with the Department of Safety and Security, are evaluating the main

findings of the review to identify risks, opportunities and other implications, with a view to implementing the recommendations.

29. As at 8 November 2018, UNDOF comprised 983 troops, including 38 women. Troops were deployed from Bhutan (3), Czechia (3), Fiji (294), Ghana (12), India (194), Ireland (138), Nepal (337) and the Netherlands (2). In addition, 70 military observers from UNTSO Observer Group Golan, including 8 women, assisted UNDOF in carrying out its tasks.

## III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

30. In its resolution 2426 (2018), the Security Council called upon the parties concerned to immediately implement its resolution 338 (1973). It decided to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a period of six months, until 31 December 2018, and requested the Secretary-General to report every 90 days on developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement resolution 338 (1973). The search for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Middle East, in particular the efforts made at various levels to implement resolution 338 (1973), was addressed in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/73/322), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 72/15 on Jerusalem and 72/16 on the Syrian Golan.

31. Since the discontinuation of indirect peace talks in December 2008, there have been no negotiations between the parties. The Syrian conflict further reduces the prospects for their resumption and for progress towards peace between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic. I look forward to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the resumption of efforts towards a comprehensive, just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973) and other relevant resolutions.

## IV. Financial aspects

32. The General Assembly, by its resolution 72/298 of 5 July 2018, appropriated the amount of $60.3 million for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019.

33. As at 16 November 2018, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNDOF amounted to $14.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $1,607.6 million.

34. Reimbursement of troop costs has been made for the period up to 31 July 2018, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 30 June 2018, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

## V. Observations

35. I note the calm situation following the cessation of military activity of the Syrian armed forces and armed groups, and between various armed groups, including listed terrorist groups, in the UNDOF area of operation. Noting the presence of the Syrian armed forces in the area, I reiterate that there should be no military forces in the area of separation other than those of UNDOF. I urge all parties to the Syrian conflict to cease military actions throughout the country and to remove all military equipment and personnel from the area of separation.

36. The Israel Defense Forces should refrain from firing across the ceasefire line. The continued presence of unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on the Alpha side is of concern.

37. It remains critical that the parties maintain their liaison with UNDOF to prevent any escalation of the situation across the ceasefire line. All violations of the ceasefire line increase tensions between the signatories to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and undermine progress towards stability in the area.

38. I note the support of the parties in the re-opening of the Qunaytirah crossing to facilitate the operations of UNDOF. It is important that the parties provide all necessary support to allow full utilization of the crossing by UNDOF in line with established procedures. It is critical that UNDOF carry out its operations without facing any administrative obstacles. This is even more important as UNDOF increases its operations on the Bravo side to facilitate effective and efficient mandate implementation.

39. As UNDOF continues to consolidate its presence at Camp Faouar and maintains its efforts to intensify its operations in the area of separation, it remains critical that the safety and security of United Nations personnel be assured. The circumstances under which the troops and military observers are operating continue to require vigilance and risk mitigation measures. I renew my call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to continue to fulfil its primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel on the Bravo side.

40. The implementation of the recommendations of the independent review of UNDOF will contribute to the efforts of the Mission to carry out its mandate in an efficient and effective manner as it continues to return gradually to full operations in the area of separation. The continued commitment of both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and support for the presence of UNDOF remains essential. The full return of UNDOF to the area of separation continues to be a priority for the Mission, conditions permitting. I count on the continued cooperation of both parties to facilitate the advancement of the Mission's plans for an incremental return to operations and positions in the area of separation and to ensure that the Mission can implement its mandate. It is critical that UNDOF be able to deploy the technology and equipment necessary to enhance its observation of the area of separation and the ceasefire line and to augment force protection. In that regard, the support and cooperation of both Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic in ensuring that the deployment of the necessary technology and equipment occurs seamlessly and expeditiously are essential. At the same time, the parties must continue to support the enhancement of the liaison function of UNDOF.

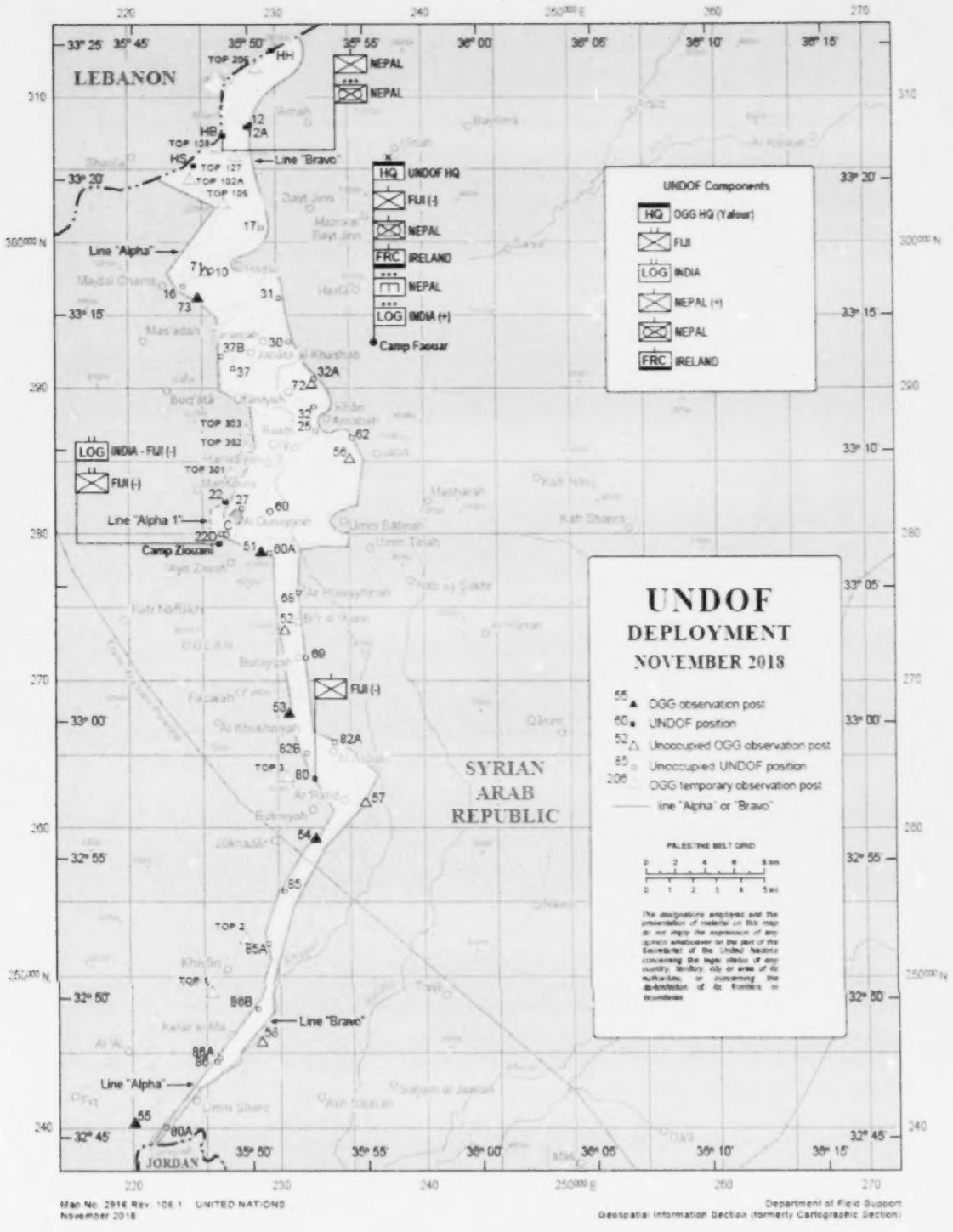
41. It is equally important that the Security Council continue to bring to bear its influence on the parties concerned to ensure that UNDOF is accorded the ability to operate in a safe and secure manner and is allowed to operate freely in accordance with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement. The support of the parties in facilitating the clearance of mines, unexploded ordnance and remnants of war in the UNDOF area of operation is crucial. It is also necessary for UNDOF to continue to have at its disposal all means and resources necessary for it to return fully to the area of separation, conditions permitting.

42. The confidence and commitment of troop-contributing countries in UNDOF remain key factors in the Mission's ability to carry out its mandate. I continue to count on the support of troop-contributing countries as UNDOF proceeds with the implementation of its agreed plan to increase operations in the area of separation. I am grateful to the Governments of Bhutan, Czechia, Fiji, Ghana, India, Ireland, Nepal and the Netherlands for their contributions, commitment, resolve and consummate

professionalism. I am also thankful to the Member States that have contributed military observers to UNTSO.

43. I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area to be essential, and all the more so under the prevailing circumstances. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for a further period of six months, until 30 June 2019. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of Israel also has expressed its agreement.

44. In conclusion, I wish to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Francis Vib-Sanziri, and the military and civilian personnel serving under his leadership, who continue to perform the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council with efficiency and commitment under challenging circumstances.


LEBANON
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC
JORDAN
Line "Alpha"
Line "Bravo"
Line "Alpha 1"
Camp Faouar
Camp Ziouani
NEPAL
FIJI (-)
IRELAND
INDIA (+)
INDIA - FIJI (-)
UNDOF HQ
UNDOF Components
HQ OGG HQ (Yalour)
FIJI
INDIA
NEPAL (+)
NEPAL
IRELAND
UNDOF
DEPLOYMENT
NOVEMBER 2018
OGG observation post
UNDOF position
Unoccupied OGG observation post
Unoccupied UNDOF position
OGG temporary observation post
line "Alpha" or "Bravo"
PALESTINE BELT GRID
Map No. 2916 Rev. 106.1 UNITED NATIONS
November 2018
Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)

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# Sixth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)

## I. Introduction

1. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 2231 (2015), stands out as a demonstration of successful multilateralism. It is a major achievement in nuclear non-proliferation and in dialogue and diplomacy. The Plan and the resolution remain in effect. The participants in the Plan, the Council, all Member States and regional and other international actors must ensure the continuity of this agreement that is fundamental to regional and international peace and security. I remain of the view that issues not directly related to the Plan should be addressed without prejudice to preserving the agreement and its accomplishments.

2. I welcome the fact that the Islamic Republic of Iran continues the implementation of its nuclear-related commitments, as verified by the International Atomic Energy Agency, in the face of considerable challenges brought about by the withdrawal of the United States of America from the Join Comprehensive Plan of Action and its subsequent decisions to reimpose all its national sanctions that had been lifted or waived pursuant to the Plan. I regret these actions and firmly believe that they do not advance the goals set out in the Plan and resolution 2231 (2015), in which all Member States, regional organizations and international organizations were called upon to support the implementation of the Plan and to refrain from actions that undermine it. I note the concerns expressed in the letter dated 5 November 2018 addressed to me by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran (A/73/490-S/2018/988).

3. In this regard, I welcome the reaffirmation by participants in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, during the meeting of the Joint Commission held in Vienna on 6 July 2018 and during the ministerial meeting of the E3/EU+2 and the Islamic Republic of Iran held in New York on 24 September 2018, of their commitments to the full and effective implementation of the Plan. I welcome and am encouraged by their initiatives to protect the freedom of their economic operators to pursue legitimate business with the Islamic Republic of Iran, in full accordance with resolution 2231 (2015). It is essential that the Plan continue to work for all its participants, including by delivering tangible economic benefits to the Iranian people. It is critical that these initiatives be given full effect as soon as possible.

4. The continued implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and resolution 2231 (2015) also enjoys the full support of the broader international community. Statements in support of the Plan were made by numerous Member



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States, including during the general debate of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. These statements demonstrate the broad and deep support for multilateral and cooperative approaches to addressing threats to international peace and security. I call upon all Member States to work effectively with the participants in the Plan towards its preservation, including in creating the conditions necessary for their economic operators to engage in trade with the Islamic Republic of Iran, in accordance with the resolution.

5. I acknowledge the important contribution of the International Atomic Energy Agency in providing the international community with reports on its verification and monitoring in the Islamic Republic of Iran in the light of resolution 2231 (2015). Since January 2016, the Agency has reported 13 times to the Security Council. In its most recent reports (S/2018/835 and S/2018/1048), the Agency again reported that it continued to verify and monitor the implementation by the Islamic Republic of Iran of its nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The Agency also reported that it continued to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material and that its evaluations regarding the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities for the Islamic Republic of Iran remained ongoing. The Agency further reported that the Islamic Republic of Iran continued to provisionally apply the Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement, pending its entry into force, and to apply the transparency measures contained in the Plan. In its most recent reports, the Agency also indicated that it had conducted complementary accesses under the Additional Protocol to all the sites and locations in the Islamic Republic of Iran that it needed to visit.

6. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is only one part of resolution 2231 (2015). Staunch support for the Plan among the participants and Member States continues to be accompanied with concerns about Iranian activities in relation to the restrictive measures contained in annex B to the resolution. Therefore, I again encourage the Islamic Republic of Iran to carefully consider and address these concerns.

7. The present report provides an assessment of the implementation of the resolution, including findings and recommendations, since the issuance of my fifth report (S/2018/602), on 12 June 2018. Consistent with previous reports, the focus of the present report is on the provisions set forth in annex B to resolution 2231 (2015), which include restrictions applicable to nuclear-related transfers, ballistic missile-related transfers and arms-related transfers to or from the Islamic Republic of Iran, as well as asset freeze and travel ban provisions.

## II. Key findings and recommendations

8. The procurement channel continues to be a vital transparency and confidence-building mechanism ensuring that transfers of certain goods, technology and/or related services to the Islamic Republic of Iran are consistent with resolution 2231 (2015) and the provisions and objectives of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Since 12 June 2018, five additional proposals have been submitted to the Security Council. The channel is operational and effective, and I encourage all States and the private sector to fully utilize and support this channel.

9. The Secretariat received further information on two shipments of dual-use items, previously brought to the attention of the Security Council. The authorities of two manufacturing States confirmed that, in their assessment, the items did not meet the criteria set out in INFCIRC/254/Rev.10/Part 2 and therefore did not require prior approval of the Council through the procurement channel.

10. During the reporting period, the Secretariat examined the debris of three additional ballistic missiles launched at the territory of Saudi Arabia on 25 March and 11 April 2018. The Secretariat observed design characteristics and component parts consistent with those of the missiles that it had examined previously. The debris of the three missiles had internal and external features consistent with those of the Scud-B missile and all its variants, as well as specific key design features consistent with those of the Iranian Qiam-1 short-range ballistic missile. However, the Secretariat has not been able to determine whether such missiles, parts thereof or related technology were transferred from the Islamic Republic of Iran after 16 January 2016, the day on which the restrictions set out in annex B to resolution 2231 (2015) came into force.[1]

11. The Secretariat also examined two container launch units for anti-tank guided missiles recovered by the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. The Secretariat found that they had characteristics of Iranian manufacture and that their markings indicated production dates in 2016 and 2017. The Secretariat also examined a partly disassembled surface-to-air missile seized by the Saudi-led coalition and observed that its features appeared to be consistent with those of an Iranian missile. The Secretariat is still analysing the information available on this disassembled missile, and I intend to report back to the Security Council accordingly.

## III. Implementation of nuclear-related provisions

12. Since 12 June 2018, 5 new proposals to participate in or permit the activities set forth in paragraph 2 of annex B to resolution 2231 (2015) have been submitted to the Security Council, bringing to 42 the total number of proposals submitted since Implementation Day (16 January 2016) for approval through the procurement channel. At the time of reporting, 28 proposals had been approved by the Council, 4 had not been approved, 9 had been withdrawn by the proposing States and 1 was currently under review. The Council also received five new notifications pursuant to the same provision for certain nuclear-related activities that only required a notification to the Council or to both the Council and the Joint Commission.

13. Since my previous report, the Secretariat received further information related to three of the four shipments of dual-use items seized by the United Arab Emirates in May 2016 and April 2017 while in transit to the Islamic Republic of Iran (see S/2018/602, para. 18). Contrary to the original assessment by the authorities of the United Arab Emirates, the authorities of two of the States of manufacture have confirmed that, in their assessment, the 40 cylindrical segments of tungsten and the 10 capacitors did not meet the criteria set out in INFCIRC/254/Rev.10/Part 2 and that their re-export to the Islamic Republic of Iran did not require prior approval of the Security Council.[2] The authorities of another State of manufacture informed the Secretariat that, in their assessment, the inductively coupled mass spectrometer met the criteria set out in the above-mentioned information circular, but that their internal review was ongoing. I intend to report thereon to the Council as more information becomes available on this shipment and on the shipment of one titanium rod.

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[1] Any such transfer from the Islamic Republic of Iran between the adoption of Security Council resolution 1737 (2006) and 16 January 2016 would have been subject to paragraph 7 of that resolution. The provisions of resolution 1737 (2006) and those of other previous Council resolutions on the Iranian nuclear issue were terminated on 16 January 2016.

[2] According to one State of manufacture, the 40 cylindrical segments did not contain more than 90 per cent tungsten by weight (see 2.C.14 of INFCIRC/254/Rev.10/Part 2). According to the other States of manufacture, the 10 capacitors do not meet the voltage rating and energy storage criteria of 6.A.4.(a) or the voltage rating criteria of 6.A.4 (b) of INFCIRC/254/Rev.10/Part 2.

14. In addition, on 30 October 2018, the United States provided the Secretariat with additional information on the transfer of two commodities that, in their assessment, would have required prior approval from the Security Council (see S/2018/602, para. 19). According to this information, at least 50 tonnes of aluminium alloys were shipped to the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2016 and 2017, and the carbon fibre was shipped in 2017. The Secretariat has sought clarification on that additional information from relevant Member States and will report to the Council in due course.

# IV. Implementation of ballistic missile-related provisions

## A. Restrictions on ballistic missile-related activities by the Islamic Republic of Iran

15. During the reporting period, I received information regarding ballistic missiles reportedly launched by the Islamic Republic of Iran on 30 September and 1 October 2018 at targets in the Syrian Arab Republic. In identical letters dated 19 October 2018 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (S/2018/939), the Permanent Representative of Israel noted that, according to Iranian media outlets, at least five ballistic missiles with a range of 700 km were launched. He considered that those missiles "crossed the Annex B threshold" of resolution 2231 (2015) and called upon the Council to condemn the activity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In a joint letter dated 20 November 2018 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/1062), the Permanent Representatives of France, Germany and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland stressed that those ballistic missiles were category I systems under the Missile Technology Control Regime[3] and therefore inherently capable of delivering nuclear weapons. They concluded that the launches of those missiles constituted an "activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons" and "launches using such ballistic missile technology", which the Islamic Republic of Iran has been called upon not to undertake pursuant to paragraph 3 of annex B to the resolution. In the letter, they also stated that those launches were destabilizing and increased regional tensions.

16. I also received information regarding flight tests of ballistic missiles by the Islamic Republic of Iran. In identical letters dated 23 November 2018 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (S/2018/1047), the Permanent Representative of Israel brought to my attention information regarding seven flight tests reportedly conducted in 2018, in addition to those of a Shahab-3 variant and a Scud variant in January 2018 (see S/2018/602, para. 22). According to the information provided, one Khorramshahr, two Shahab-3 variants, one Qiam and three Zolfaghar ballistic missiles were flight-tested between February and August 2018. The Permanent Representative stated that their test-firing was in violation of resolution 2231 (2015) because those ballistic missiles were all category I systems under the Missile Technology Control Regime and therefore inherently capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

17. In a letter dated 29 October 2018 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (S/2018/967), the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran recalled that "the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, acting in legitimate self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, took limited and measured military action on 1 October 2018 in Syria, targeting

[3] Category I systems under the Missile Technology Control Regime are defined as "complete rocket systems (including ballistic missiles, space launch vehicles, and sounding rockets) capable of delivering at least a 500 kg 'payload' to a 'range' of at least 300 km" (see I.A.1 of the Equipment, Software and Technology Annex of the Missile Technology Control Regime).

terrorist elements that are also linked to the terrorist act in Ahvaz". However, in reference to the letter from the Permanent Representative of Israel dated 23 November, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in a letter dated 29 November addressed to me and the President of the Council (S/2018/1073), stated that the Islamic Republic of Iran had "not launched any type of such missiles on any of the dates specified in the letter". The Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in his letter dated 29 October, also reiterated the view of the Islamic Republic of Iran that none of its missiles were "designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons", but rather, as the Chargé d'affaires a.i. had indicated in a letter dated 28 November addressed to the President of the Council (S/2018/1061), "'designed' to be exclusively capable of delivering conventional warheads", and thus fell outside the purview of resolution 2231 (2015). The Chargé d'affaires a.i., in his letter dated 28 November, also stressed that there was no implicit or explicit reference to the Missile Technology Control Regime in paragraph 3 of annex B to the resolution and concluded that none of its criteria were applicable to the paragraph.

18. In a letter dated 30 November 2018 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council, the Chargé d'affaires a.i of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation underscored that the Islamic Republic of Iran was not prohibited by resolution 2231 (2015) to develop missile and space programmes and that it had been respecting in good faith the call to refrain from activities related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of carrying nuclear weapons. He noted that there was no evidence that the Islamic Republic of Iran was developing or producing a nuclear weapon or means of its delivery. He underlined that the category I parameters of the Missile Technology Control Regime were never intended to be used in the context of the resolution to ascertain whether certain missiles are designed to be capable of carrying nuclear weapons. He further stated that missiles designed to be capable of carrying nuclear weapons included certain features and that no "evidence of the existence of such features on Iranian ballistic missiles or space launch vehicles" was presented to the Council.

19. On 4 December 2018, the Security Council discussed the reported test firing of a medium-range ballistic missile by the Islamic Republic of Iran on 1 December 2018.

## B. Restrictions on ballistic missile-related transfers or activities with the Islamic Republic of Iran

20. In relation to the possible transfer of ballistic missiles, parts thereof or related technology by the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Houthis in Yemen, Saudi Arabia brought to the attention of the Secretariat two additional launches of ballistic missiles by the Houthis, aimed at the territory of Saudi Arabia, on 24 June 2018 (S/2018/636), which, in their assessment, were Iranian Qiam-1 missiles.[4] The Islamic Republic of Iran had previously stated that it "neither has a policy nor seeks to transfer arms or military equipment in Yemen or manufacture them therein" (S/2018/145). In September 2018, Saudi authorities invited the Secretariat to examine the debris that they stated was of three missiles reportedly launched at Riyadh on 25 March and 11 April 2018. The Secretariat conducted first-hand examinations of the physical debris presented by Saudi authorities and collected all other information and material available, including photographs and video of the debris in situ, to confirm that the debris seen in those images corresponded to the debris presented to the Secretariat.

[4] The 12 previous launches reportedly occurred on 22 July (1), 4 November (1) and 19 December 2017 (1), and on 5 January (1), 30 January (1), 25 March (3), 11 April (1), 9 May (2) and 5 June 2018 (1).

The Secretariat observed that the debris of the three missiles had design characteristics and component parts consistent with all those that it had previously examined and reported thereon to the Security Council (see S/2018/602, paras. 28 to 30). The Secretariat is still working on establishing the production date range of guidance subcomponents with the assistance of the foreign manufacturers and will report back to the Council in due course.

21. In August 2018, media outlets reported that a shipment to the Islamic Republic of Iran of at least two items with potential missile-related applications had been halted at London Heathrow airport.[5] In response to a request for clarification, the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom informed the Secretariat that several goods (seal kits, packing rings, packing sets and O-rings) had been seized by customs after having been presented for export to the Islamic Republic of Iran without a valid licence. However, the Permanent Mission added that the exporter later applied for, and was granted, an export licence.

## V. Implementation of arms-related provisions

22. In a press conference on 26 March 2018, the Saudi-led coalition publicly displayed a partly disassembled missile that it indicated had been found in a consignment destined to the Houthis and seized earlier in March 2018. Saudi authorities alleged that it was an Iranian-made Sayyad 2C surface-to-air missile. While in Riyadh in September 2018, the Secretariat examined the partly disassembled missile, which was missing its forward guidance nose section and fins. The Secretariat observed that its length and other external features (e.g., mounting for the rear fins, mounting notches and brackets for the long mid-section fins) appeared consistent with those of the Iranian Sayyad-2C visible in video and photographs published by Iranian media outlets. The Secretariat further observed that the paint, serial numbering and other markings also appeared to be consistent with those of the Sayyad-2C. The Secretariat also observed that markings on the missile airframe and quality control labels on internal components were in Farsi. The Secretariat continues to analyse the information available on this missile, and I will report back to the Security Council, as appropriate, in due course.

23. In June and August 2018, the authorities of the United Arab Emirates brought to the attention of the Secretariat information about additional unmanned aerial vehicles, reportedly recovered in Yemen, including some fitted with an explosive charge. In their assessment, those unmanned aerial vehicles were Iranian-made and had been transferred in a manner inconsistent with paragraph 6 (b) of resolution 2231 (2015). In September 2018, the Secretariat was invited to examine the remnants of those unmanned aerial vehicles in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. The Secretariat observed a number of unmanned aerial vehicles with characteristics consistent with those of the unmanned aerial vehicles examined during the previous reporting periods, which had the same design features as the Iranian-made Ababil-2 unmanned aerial vehicles (see S/2018/602, para. 40). Furthermore, the Secretariat examined the remnants of two different unmanned aerial vehicles. The Secretariat is still analysing the information collected on all these unmanned aerial vehicles and on their foreign-made components and will report to the Security Council, as appropriate, in due course.

24. While in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia in September 2018, the Secretariat was presented with two container launch units — one in each of the aforementioned countries — for anti-tank guided missiles, whose production dates

[5] Martin Bentham, "Heathrow Airport border staff 'seize missile parts that were being sent to Iran'", *Evening Standard*, 2 August 2018. Available at www.standard.co.uk/news/london/heathrow-border-staff-seize-missile-parts-that-were-being-sent-to-iran-a3902096.html.

were marked on the units as 2016 and 2017, respectively. According to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, both had been recovered in Yemen by forces of the Saudi-led coalition. The Secretariat observed specific characteristics consistent with those of the container launch units for the Iranian-produced Dehlavieh anti-tank guided missile visible in video and photographs published by Iranian media outlets (left-aligned marking without spaces between lines; location of marking in upper third of unit; indication of missile type code, missile type, lot, date, serial number and temperature range; font type indicative of Iranian markings; and pronounced end cap chamfer).

25. In October 2018, United States authorities invited the Secretariat to examine an arms shipment, which they believed was relevant to the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015), consisting of approximately 2,500 AKMS-type assault rifles, seized on 28 August 2018 en route towards Yemen in international waters in the Gulf of Aden. The Secretariat established that the seized assault rifles did not have the characteristics of Iranian production. The Secretariat will continue to analyse new information should it become available, and I will report to the Security Council, as appropriate.

26. In identical letters dated 22 November 2018 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (S/2018/1046), the Permanent Representative of Israel stated that, in April 2018, one Iranian-produced Khordad air defence system was delivered to the "T4 airbase" in the Syrian Arab Republic. According to Israel, the system was delivered using an Iranian transport plane and unloaded in the presence of senior officials of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The Permanent Representative concluded that the air defence system had been transferred by the Islamic Republic of Iran in a manner inconsistent with resolution 2231 (2015). In the letter dated 29 November 2018 addressed to me and the President of the Council (S/2018/1073), the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated that the allegations in the aforementioned letter from the Permanent Representative of Israel were "entirely false".

27. In my previous report, I brought to the attention of the Security Council the participation of Iranian entities in foreign exhibitions, including the Eurasia Airshow 2018, held in Antalya, Turkey, in April 2018. In July 2018, the Permanent Mission of Turkey informed the Secretariat that Iranian participants only exhibited mock-up unmanned aerial vehicles and that no commercial transaction had taken place with regard to those items. Meanwhile, information released by the organizer of the third Azerbaijan International Defence Exhibition, held in Baku in September 2018, indicated that an Iranian entity also participated in the exhibition.[6] According to media coverage of that exhibition, the items displayed by that entity appear to have been tactical and reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicles. The Secretariat has raised this issue with the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan. The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran previously stated that it believed that no prior approval was required from the Council for that activity, given that the Islamic Republic of Iran retained ownership of the items exhibited. I intend to report thereon to the Council in due course as additional information becomes available.

## VI. Implementation of the travel ban provision

28. Regarding the previously reported travel of Major General Soleimani to Baghdad in mid-May 2018, the Permanent Mission of Iraq informed the Secretariat in July 2018 that he had been denied permission to enter Iraqi territory through

[6] List of participants at the exhibition available at https://adex.az/en-content/11.html.

Baghdad International Airport and that he left the country without entering Iraqi territory.

## VII. Secretariat support provided to the Security Council and its Facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015)

29. The Security Council Affairs Division of the Department of Political Affairs continued to support the work of the Security Council, in close cooperation with the Facilitator for the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015). The Division also liaised with the Procurement Working Group of the Joint Commission on all matters related to the procurement channel. In October 2018, the Division participated in the European Union second Dialogue on Export Control Governance, organized by the European Commission, and the 2018 Nuclear Export Control Practices Forum, organized by the United Arab Emirates Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation. During the reporting period, the Division continued to respond to queries from and provided relevant support to Member States regarding the provisions of the resolution, in particular on the procedures for the submission of nuclear-related proposals and its review process. The Secretariat continues to assist Member States in such efforts, as needed.

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**The situation in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine**

**Security Council**
**Seventy-third year**

## Letter dated 6 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on convening consultations in accordance with the Budapest Memorandum (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 67, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-21809 (E) 191218

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## Annex to the letter dated 6 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

### Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on convening consultations in accordance with the Budapest Memorandum

Twenty-four years ago, Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons in exchange for the security assurances confirmed by the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Russian Federation in the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). In particular, these states have committed themselves to refrain from the threat of force or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of Ukraine.

The Guarantor States reaffirmed their obligation that none of their weapon will ever be used against Ukraine.

These very assurances enabled the NPT to be ratified by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

On 25 November 2018, the Russian Federation carried out yet another act of armed aggression against Ukraine by military attack on the Ukrainian Navy's vessels in the Black Sea and the Kerch Strait.

This defiant and insidious attack testifies to Russia's persistence in continuing the armed aggression against Ukraine, launched on 20 February 2014.

Ukraine remains consistent in considering the Budapest Memorandum as an important international instrument to ensure Ukraine's security, and demands from Russia to fully comply with the undertaken commitments.

The Russian aggression and violation of terms that made possible Ukraine's surrender of nuclear weapons undermine the international non-proliferation regime. They will also determine the future relations with states that may opt for development of this type of weaponry.

On 27 November 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, pursuant to the paragraph 6 of the Memorandum, appealed to the signatory states of the Budapest Memorandum and demanded urgent consultations to ensure full adherence to the commitments and immediate halt of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

The efficient steps are required to restore confidence in the Budapest Memorandum and the efforts by the international community to strengthen the international non-proliferation regime.

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Security Council

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**General Assembly**
**Seventy-third session**
Agenda item 38
**The situation in the Middle East**

**Security Council**
**Seventy-third year**

## Identical letters dated 6 December 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my capital, I should like to inform you of the following:

Lebanon condemns in the strongest possible terms the political and diplomatic campaign being waged by Israel against Lebanon, which it fears is a prelude to the launch of further attacks.

That campaign is being accompanied by a number of extremely serious acts, of which the most recent is that Israel has breached the Lebanese communications grid by hacking into the telephone network and sending recorded messages to peaceable civilian inhabitants of the southern part of the village of Kafr Killa warning them of imminent explosions to take place on Lebanese territory that might put their lives at risk.

This constitutes a new and extremely serious attack on the security and safety of the citizens of Lebanon, whereby Israel is violating the dignity and privacy of individuals and making a direct threat against their lives. Such hostile behaviour constitutes a flagrant Israeli violation of Lebanese sovereignty, Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), and other relevant resolutions, including resolutions 2373 (2017) and 2433 (2018).

This is all happening as Israel continues to occupy Lebanese territory and persists with its daily land, sea and air violations of Lebanese sovereignty at a rate of some 140 violations per month.

In the light of the preceding, Lebanon calls on the Security Council raise its voice and take all measures necessary to confront this systematic campaign being waged by Israel and Israel's ongoing violations of Lebanese sovereignty, which are a threat to the security and stability of the entire region.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 38, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Amal **Mudallali**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-21790 (E) 171218

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Security Council

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**Seventy-third session**
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**The situation in Afghanistan**

**Security Council**
**Seventy-third year**

# The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

**Report of the Secretary General**

## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/11 and Security Council resolution 2405 (2018), in which the Secretary-General was requested to report every three months on developments in Afghanistan.

2. The report provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including political, humanitarian, development and human rights efforts, since the issuance of the previous report, on 10 September 2018 (A/73/374-S/2018/824).

## II. Relevant developments

3. Parliamentary elections were held as scheduled on 20 October. In response to long delays and widespread operational difficulties, the Independent Election Commission extended voting in some polling centres for an additional day. Violence peaked on election day, causing the highest number of civilian casualties in any single day in 2018. In Kandahar Province, elections were delayed for one week following the death of two high-ranking security officials in a Taliban attack. Controversy over the use of biometric voter verification dominated both the pre-election and post-election phases, as the electoral management bodies and political parties debated whether to count ballots cast without the use of the technology. Political leaders began negotiations to form tickets for the presidential elections, scheduled for 20 April 2019. The appointment of Zalmay Khalilzad as the United States Special Representative on Afghanistan Reconciliation reinvigorated peace efforts. The Russian Federation hosted an international meeting on Afghanistan, attended by representatives of the High Peace Council of Afghanistan and the Taliban. Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan remained largely cordial. Preparations accelerated ahead of the Geneva Ministerial Conference, held on 28 November. The humanitarian situation remained



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grave, characterized by high levels of displacement, an increase in conflict-related trauma cases, and drought conditions causing food insecurity for millions of Afghans. The return of refugees from the Islamic Republic of Iran continued at high levels, placing further pressure on resources in western Afghanistan.

## A. Political developments

4. The political sphere was dominated by electoral preparations for the parliamentary elections on 20 October. In the months before the election, the Independent Election Commission advanced technical preparations, including the recruitment of polling centre staff, the compilation of polling centre-based voter lists and the accreditation of electoral observers. In cooperation with the Electoral Complaints Commission, the Independent Election Commission also held provincial electoral forums in 33 provinces to raise awareness among voters and improve buy-in among electoral stakeholders. The official campaign period started on 28 September, galvanizing political parties and candidates, who began mobilizing support at the provincial and district levels.

5. As preparations continued, political parties maintained their demand for the introduction of biometric voter verification technology as a measure to curb electoral fraud. On 15 September, supporters of the Grand National Coalition of Afghanistan, a diverse grouping of political parties, began blockades of Independent Election Commission offices in Balkh, Herat and Kandahar Provinces, expanding to Nangarhar Province on 18 September, in an effort to pressure the Commission. On 22 September, the Independent Election Commission announced that it would be responsible for the implementation of the biometric voter verification process, which entailed scanning two index fingerprints, a digital photograph of the voter and a scan of the voter's *tazkera* (identity document) and voter registration sticker. The announcement relieved the immediate pressure on the Independent Election Commission from political parties, which ceased their blockades of the four provincial Independent Election Commission offices. On 16 October, the Government's National Procurement Authority announced that, in collaboration with the Central Statistics Organization, it had signed a contract with Dermalog, a Germany-based company, to provide biometric voter verification technology on polling day. However, civil society organizations expressed concern that this late procurement left little time for crucial tasks, including additional recruitment and training of polling centre staff, public outreach, logistical arrangements for the transportation and retrieval of the biometric voter verification devices, and the revision of polling day procedures to incorporate the new technology. Electoral watchdogs raised concerns that the introduction of the technology would stretch the capacity of the Independent Election Commission to complete other electoral preparations, and the international community voiced concerns that under certain configurations, the technology could threaten the secrecy of the ballot.

6. Electoral preparations were further complicated by significant security threats against the electoral process by the Taliban, which issued statements warning voters and electoral staff not to participate in the elections and threatening security personnel charged with protecting election personnel and sites. A total of nine candidates were assassinated in the pre-election period, with the Taliban claiming responsibility for two of the attacks. Public confidence was shaken by the assassination of the Chief of Police of Kandahar Province, Abdul Razziq, in an attack claimed by the Taliban. In the aftermath, it was decided to postpone parliamentary elections in Kandahar Province until 27 October.

7. On 20 October, parliamentary elections were held in 32 provinces, all except Kandahar and Ghazni, where voter registration and candidate nominations had earlier

been stymied by protests blocking the Independent Election Commission. The elections were characterized by high voter enthusiasm, despite security threats. However, late polling centre openings often due to security threats against polling staff, confusion over the use of biometric voter verification devices, and errors in the newly introduced voter lists caused lengthy delays in many areas, leading some voters to leave polling centres without casting their ballots. Amid increasing voter frustration, the Independent Election Commission announced on the afternoon of 20 October that polling would be extended for several hours and that polling centres that had failed to open by 1 p.m. would be reopened on 21 October. In response to widespread reports of unavailable or malfunctioning biometric voter verification devices, the Commission also announced that voting could take place using voter lists in cases where biometric voter verification was unavailable. The announcements placated voters in some areas but prompted concerns among some candidates that the additional time and ensuing confusion could create opportunities for fraud. On 21 October, polling centres opened in many provinces and in Kabul City. The following week, on 27 October, parliamentary elections were conducted in Kandahar Province, with technical problems similar to those that had occurred on 20 October. According to the Independent Election Commission, a total of 4,812 polling centres were open across the three days of voting, with the estimated turnout reported at 4.2 million voters. The turnout was higher in provincial capitals, with particularly high numbers recorded in Kabul, Herat, Nangarhar, Paktia and Daikundi.

8. Out of 8.5 million registered voters, an estimated 35 per cent were women, an increase of eight percentage points compared with the 2014 presidential election. On election day, female voter turnout was estimated at around 30 per cent of the electorate. Polling stations for women numbered 7,429 compared with 11,667 for men. Some 13,000 Afghan women reportedly participated as election observers across Afghanistan.

9. The retrieval of materials and tally of results commenced immediately. Ballot retrieval was delayed in several provinces, owing mainly to security threats that required the use of helicopter rather than road movements. Recounts were subsequently announced by the Independent Election Commission in 24 provinces, owing to incomplete forms and procedural irregularities. The Electoral Complaints Commission registered 11,845 complaints. As at 18 November, it had completed adjudicating 10,447 complaints in 21 provinces.

10. The aftermath of the election was marred by a public dispute between the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission over the validity of non-biometric voter verification ballots. On 27 October, the Electoral Complaints Commission issued a statement declaring that all votes cast without the use of biometric voter verification should be nullified. Although not within the remit of the Electoral Complaints Commission, the statement quickly attracted the support of political parties and many candidates, who claimed that discarding non-biometric voter verification ballots was the only way to ensure that fraudulent votes were not counted towards the election results. Others expressed concern that the nullification of non-biometric voter verification ballots could result in the ballots of millions of genuine voters being discarded. On 30 October, the two Commissions released a joint statement announcing that non-biometric voter verification ballots would be counted, provided that printed voter lists had been used and verified in the polling centres. On 3 November, the Independent Election Commission announced that the publication of the preliminary election results would be delayed from the scheduled date of 10 November to a new date of 23 November for 32 provinces and 1 December for Kabul Province. On 23 November, however, the Commission had announced results for only five provinces.

11. As delays in the ballot retrieval and counting accumulated, political parties and opposition figures expressed increasing concern about the conduct of the elections, with some voicing scepticism that the Independent Election Commission would be unable to conduct the presidential elections on the scheduled date of 20 April 2019. The uncertainty over the presidential election led to the resurrection of calls for an interim administration, advocated most vocally by former President Karzai. On 6 November, the leader of the Hizb-i Islami political movement, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, joined those calls, stating that the electoral system should be changed to a proportional representation system and warning that Hizb-i Islami would call for an interim administration if demands were not met.

12. Nonetheless, most political leaders began channelling their energies towards the contestation of the 2019 presidential elections, with coalition-building activities accelerating as the deadline for finalizing nominations approached. On 31 October, Hizb-i Islami announced that the movement was considering fielding its own candidate for President in consultation with other political groups. Separately, on 8 November, the Grand National Coalition of Afghanistan announced that it would present a ticket with a presidential candidate, three Vice-Presidents, a Prime Minister and three deputy Prime Ministers. On 13 November, Chief Executive Abdullah stated that he would decide on his potential candidacy in consultation with former jihadi groups, but ruled out lending his support to another presidential candidate.

13. Meanwhile, President Ghani conducted a series of provincial visits, travelling to Ghazni, Faryab, Parwan, Kandahar, Helmand, Paktika and Daikundi Provinces, where he highlighted the Government's commitments on local infrastructure projects and security. On 2 November, the spokesperson for President Ghani confirmed that the President would run for re-election. On 9 November, while visiting the Hazara-majority province of Daikundi, President Ghani announced that the current Second Vice-President, Sarwar Danesh, an ethnic Hazara, would form part of his ticket.

14. On 25 August, the then National Security Adviser, Hanif Atmar, announced that he had resigned from his position owing to policy differences with President Ghani. The following day, President Ghani announced the appointment to the position of Hamdullah Mohib, the then Ambassador to the United States of America. This was followed by a series of personnel changes in the security leadership. On 2 October, President Ghani dismissed his Senior Adviser and Deputy Director of the National Security Council, Din Mohammad Jurat. A statement issued by the Office of the President confirmed that General Jurat had been removed by presidential decree. No details were given on the circumstances leading to his removal. On 18 October, seven members of the Office of the National Security Adviser resigned, including two senior members, the Directors of Strategic Threat Assessment and Strategic Communications.

15. The pursuit by Afghanistan of a negotiated peace settlement received additional impetus on 21 September, when the United States appointed Zalmay Khalilzad as its Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation. From 4 to 14 October, Mr. Khalilzad visited Afghanistan, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in an effort to generate regional support for the Afghan peace process. During his visit to Afghanistan, Mr. Khalilzad met with President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah, representatives of the High Peace Council and members of the political opposition. In the meetings, Mr. Khalilzad emphasized the necessity of Afghan ownership of the peace process and, in a subsequent press conference, called on the Government and the Taliban to form negotiating teams to engage in direct talks. On 5 November, President Ghani announced that a national consultation board on the peace process would be formed with representatives nominated by civilian and military authorities in all 34 provinces. On 13 October, the Taliban announced that Mr. Khalilzad had met with the Taliban Political Commission in Qatar the previous day. According to the statement by the Taliban, the meeting was constructive, with

discussions revolving around the withdrawal of international troops from Afghanistan and finding a solution to the Afghan conflict. On 30 October, the Taliban announced the appointment of five senior officials, formerly imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay, to its Political Commission. On 10 November, Mr. Khalilzad visited Afghanistan again, meeting with Government officials and members of the political opposition to discuss his plans for future regional engagement. This was followed by visits to other countries in the region, including Qatar, where Mr. Khalilzad again met with the Taliban Political Commission.

16. On 9 November, the Russian Federation hosted a conference on Afghanistan in Moscow, with representatives from China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and from the High Peace Council of Afghanistan and the Taliban Political Commission. An embassy official from the United States joined as well. Speaking at the conference, the Taliban representative reiterated the Taliban's position that the presence of international military forces was the main obstacle to peace in Afghanistan, adding that other issues, including mutual recognition between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban, constitutional amendments and women's rights, could be negotiated once the issue of foreign troops had been resolved. Following the conference, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement in which it welcomed all efforts towards a peace process in Afghanistan but warned against allowing the Taliban to instrumentalize regional processes.

17. Since August, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) field offices have supported eight local peace initiatives, covering a total of 11 provinces. These included a series of consultations in support of the role of young people in the peace process in Paktya Province, an intercommunity conflict resolution initiative in Samangan Province and a project bringing together elders, religious scholars, women and young people to discuss confidence-building measures in volatile areas of Helmand Province.

## B. Security

18. The security situation remained volatile, with incidents continuing at consistently high levels. While the number of security incidents in some categories decreased slightly, the overall number of casualties rose owing to an increase in the severity of certain attacks. The two contrasting exceptions to this trend were the Eid al-Adha holiday period and the first day of parliamentary elections on 20 October, which recorded exceptionally low and high incident levels, respectively. Between 16 August and 15 November, UNAMA recorded a total of 5,854 security incidents, a 2 per cent decrease compared with the same period in 2017. The southern region saw the highest number of incidents followed by the eastern and south-eastern regions. Armed clashes continued to comprise the largest number of security incidents, recording 63 per cent of the total, although the number was 5 per cent lower compared with the same period in 2017. Suicide attacks decreased by 37 per cent, possibly reflecting successful interdiction efforts in Kabul and Jalalabad cities, while air strikes by the Afghan Air Force and international military forces increased by 25 per cent compared with the same period in 2017.

19. The overall level of violence decreased significantly during the Eid al-Adha holiday from 20 to 24 August. Over the holiday week, UNAMA recorded a total of 227 incidents, the lowest level of violence in a one-week period since early 2013. This reduction in violence occurred despite the Taliban's lack of acknowledgement of President Ghani's offer, on 19 August, of a three-month conditional ceasefire. Mirroring the security dynamics witnessed around the Eid al-Fitr holiday in June, the

number of Taliban-initiated attacks after Eid al-Adha quickly returned to the 2018 weekly average of 433 incidents.

20. The first election day, 20 October, witnessed high levels of security incidents around the country, with the Taliban conducting attacks and placing improvised explosive devices to disrupt the election process. Kunduz City recorded the highest number of incidents (25) followed by Kabul City, where there were 14 improvised explosive device attacks as well as a high-profile suicide attack claimed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP). Taking into account that voting did not take place in Kandahar and Ghazni Provinces, the overall number of security incidents on 20 October was comparable to figures recorded during the 2014 presidential run-off election. While intimidation by the Taliban was reported to have deterred many voters from turning out in areas under their control and influence, the high number of incidents did not result in any significant disruption of the electoral process in urban areas. On 29 October, a suicide attacker detonated at the entrance to the Independent Election Commission compound in Kabul. ISIL-KP claimed responsibility for the attack. This was the second suicide attack recorded at the headquarters of the Commission in 2018.

21. Following the large-scale Taliban attack in Ghazni City in August, concerns remained about the possibility of another major attack in the south-east, including against Ghazni City. While that did not occur, the Taliban continued to pressure Government forces in the city outskirts, surrounding districts and along the main Highway 1, eventually capturing Andar district on 14 October. Security deteriorated in the Hazara-dominated western areas of Ghazni Province, with large-scale Taliban attacks leading to heavy clashes and large-scale displacement during the first half of November. A separate clash between Taliban and pro-Government militias in Khas Uruzgan district of Uruzgan Province also caused the displacement of Hazara families in November.

22. The Taliban temporarily captured strategic posts along main roads in several regions, allowing the group to effectively restrict movement between provinces. Along the Highway 1 route to Kabul, the Taliban captured Daymirdad and Sayyidabad districts of Wardak Province. The Taliban also carried out frequent attacks on the Mazar-Shirbingham and Maimana-Andkhoy main roads in the northern region, and along the Herat-Qala-e Naw road in the west, complicating Government access and limiting the movements of residents. On 30 September, the Taliban carried out a coordinated attack against several Government check posts in Qaysar district of Faryab Province, resulting in a protracted clash before the Taliban forces retreated on 1 October.

23. Concerns about security increased in Kandahar Province following the assassination of police chief Abdul Razziq, along with the provincial head of the National Directorate of Security, General Abdul Momin Husain Khel, in an armed attack in Kandahar City on 18 October. The Governor of Kandahar Province, Zalmai Wesa, was wounded in the attack, which occurred during the visit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Resolute Support Mission Commander. The Taliban claimed responsibility and posted the name of the alleged assailant on social media. On 22 October, following lobbying by local elders, President Ghani appointed Razziq's younger brother Tadin as the provincial Chief of Police.

24. The ISIL-KP presence remained significant in the eastern region, where the group claimed responsibility for three suicide and complex attacks in Nangarhar Province during the reporting period and six attacks in Kabul City. However, the robust presence of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in Jalalabad City since August appeared to have a positive impact on the overall security situation in the city. ISIL-KP continued to fight against the Taliban, with armed clashes between

the two groups reported in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces. International military forces continued to target ISIL-KP, conducting a series of air strikes against targets in Deh Bala, Achin, Khogyani, Nazyan and Chaparhar districts of Nangarhar Province.

25. Thirteen incidents involving United Nations personnel were reported, including three cases of intimidation, seven criminal-related incidents and two improvised explosive device-related incidents. The dependant of a United Nations staff member living in Kunduz Province abducted in a criminal incident was released on 29 October.

## C. Regional cooperation

26. Afghanistan and Pakistan continued efforts to improve their bilateral relations following the inauguration in August of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan. On 15 September, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, visited Kabul, meeting with President Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Salahuddin Rabbani. Discussions addressed security, regional peace and stability, counter-terrorism and the implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity. The visit was Minister Qureshi's first official trip after his appointment and was viewed as a signal of Pakistan's prioritization of the bilateral relationship. On 22 October, President Ghani publicly stated that the assassination of the Kandahar Chief of Police had been planned in Pakistan. The allegation prompted a strong response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, which issued a statement on 24 October rejecting the claims as unfounded and calling on Afghan officials to channel discussions of security concerns through the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity mechanism.

27. Efforts to improve international cooperation on the Afghan peace process expanded. On 11 September, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) convened a meeting of permanent representatives in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, attended by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. The Secretary General of OIC called on participants to encourage all parties concerned to engage in peace talks. On 4 and 5 October, Chief Executive Abdullah visited Jakarta, meeting with the President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, who called on the Taliban to come to the negotiating table. On 3 and 4 November, a delegation from Indonesia's Ulema Council visiting Kabul reiterated support for the peace process and proposed following up on the trilateral meeting of Afghan, Pakistani and Indonesian ulema held in Jakarta in May 2018.

28. Multilateral cooperation continued under the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, with a meeting of senior officials in New York on 28 September and regional technical group meetings on culture and education in the Islamic Republic of Iran on 20 August; counter-terrorism in Kabul on 15 September; trade, commerce and industry in New Delhi on 20 October; and counter-narcotics in Moscow on 31 October.

# III. Human rights

29. On 10 October, UNAMA released its 2018 third-quarter update on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.[1] The Mission documented 8,050 civilian casualties (2,798 people killed and 5,252 injured) between 1 January and 30 September 2018, the highest number of civilian deaths recorded in the first nine months of the year since 2014. UNAMA attributed 65 per cent of all civilian casualties to anti-government elements (35 per cent to the Taliban, 25 per cent to ISIL-KP and 5 per cent to

[1] UNAMA, "Quarterly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: 1 January to 30 September 2018" (Kabul, 10 October 2018).

unidentified anti-government elements, including self-proclaimed ISIL-KP), 22 per cent to pro-government forces (16 per cent to Afghan national security forces, 5 per cent to international military forces and 1 per cent to pro-government armed groups), 10 per cent to unattributed crossfire during ground engagements between anti-government elements and pro-government forces and 3 per cent to other incidents, including explosive remnants of war and cross-border shelling.

30. The use of improvised explosive device tactics (including suicide and non-suicide attacks) caused 3,634 civilian casualties (1,065 people killed and 2,569 injured) and at 45 per cent of the total was the leading cause of civilian casualtics during the first nine months of 2018. In a special report of 7 October,[2] UNAMA documented that the use of improvised explosive devices by anti-government elements reached record high levels in the first three quarters of 2018, with anti-government elements increasingly directing such attacks against the civilian population, including minority Shi'a Muslims. Ground engagements, the second leading cause, accounted for 2,311 civilian casualties (605 people killed and 1,706 injured), amounting to 29 per cent of the total. UNAMA continued to document high levels of civilian casualties from aerial strikes by pro-government forces, recording 649 civilian casualties (313 people killed and 336 injured), with women and children comprising more than half of those casualties. UNAMA documented 2,136 child casualties (653 children killed and 1,483 injured) and 829 female casualties (250 women killed and 579 injured).

31. Violence during the parliamentary elections on 20 October caused the most civilian casualties recorded in a single day to date in 2018, as well as the most civilian casualties on any election day since UNAMA began documenting such incidents in 2009. In total, 435 civilian casualties (56 people killed and 379 injured) were recorded on election day. Nearly all the casualties resulted from deliberate or indiscriminate attacks by anti-government elements, primarily the Taliban. UNAMA documented 53 civilian casualties (13 people killed and 40 injured) from the suicide attack at a polling centre in Kabul claimed by ISIL-KP.

32. From 1 July to 30 September, the country task force on monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children in armed conflict verified 412 grave violations affecting 820 children (241 girls, 570 boys and 9 unspecified). The most significant violations were the killing and maiming of 783 children (284 deaths, of which 179 were boys, 99 were girls and 6 were unspecified; 499 children injured, of whom 356 were boys, 140 were girls and 3 were unspecified). Those living in central, southern and northern regions were the most affected. During the third quarter, there were 33 incidents of attacks against schools and education-related personnel, compared with 79 incidents during the second quarter when schools were targeted because of their use as voter registration centres. The country task force on monitoring and reporting attributed 15 incidents to ISIL-KP, 14 to the Taliban, 2 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and 1 each to pro-government militias and undetermined armed groups. The violations included nine incidents of the recruitment and use of children, involving 19 boys, five incidents of abduction, involving 15 boys, and rape and other forms of sexual violence committed against three children (two girls and one boy). In addition, it verified 19 attacks against health-care facilities and 8 incidents of denial of humanitarian access.

33. Of the 19 attacks against health facilities and health-care personnel verified by the country task force on monitoring and reporting, 15 attacks were against facilities and 4 were against health-care workers, involving eight personnel, including three

[2] UNAMA, "Special report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: Increasing harm to Afghan civilians from the deliberate and indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices" (Kabul, 7 October 2018).

women, compared with 12 incidents in the previous reporting period. The task force attributed 14 incidents to armed groups (11 to the Taliban and 3 to ISIL-KP), 2 each to the Afghan National Army and international military forces and 1 jointly to international military forces and the National Directorate of Security.

34. The country task force on monitoring and reporting verified nine incidents of the recruitment and use of children involving 19 boys (10 by the Taliban, 7 by pro-government militia and 2 by the Afghan Local Police), compared with verified recruitment and use of two boys and documentation of credible allegations of the recruitment and use of five boys in the previous reporting period. The task force verified three cases of sexual violence against children, including for the purposes of *bacha bazi*, two by the Afghan National Police and one by the Afghan Local Police. The task force verified five incidents of abduction of children, involving 15 boys (three by the Taliban and one each by the Afghan Local Police and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan).

35. On 10 November, a group of 55 juveniles, who surrendered on 31 July in Jowzjan Province along with 250 suspected affiliates of self-proclaimed ISIL-KP to Afghan National Defence and Security Forces were transferred to the Kabul Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre. The juveniles had been detained without charge by the National Directorate of Security in violation of the Criminal Procedure Code.

36. Following the launch in May 2018 of the UNAMA report "Injustice and Impunity: Mediation of Criminal Offences of Violence against Women", the Ministry of Women's Affairs established a committee on 2 October to review the Elimination of Violence against Women Law of 2009. The Directorate on Alternatives to Imprisonment, established earlier in 2018 by the Attorney General's Office to develop policy on non-custodial sentencing options, became operational in September. The Mission continued its advocacy for a policy to include alternatives to imprisonment for less serious criminal offences of violence against women. Women's protection shelters were affected by decreased donor funding, with at least 2 of the 27 operations in 21 provinces reducing their services.

37. On 25 November, the United Nations in Afghanistan commemorated International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, marking the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence global campaign under the global theme "Orange the World: #HearMeToo". UNAMA convened 13 workshops, consultations, round tables, panel discussions and an art competition, highlighting concerns regarding crimes of violence against women in Afghanistan, such as harmful traditional practices, underreporting of crimes and the implementation of the Elimination of Violence against Women Law of 2009.

38. Between 27 September and 15 November, UNAMA convened 10 Global Open Day events across Afghanistan on the theme "Women's participation in peace processes", engaging in dialogue with 224 Afghans (192 women and 32 men) representing 16 of the 34 provinces and at least 37 districts. Women emphasized the importance of their participation in peace processes. The dialogues culminated in a national event co-hosted by the United Nations on 4 December, where participants underscored the importance of equal and meaningful participation of Afghan women in peace talks.

39. On 16 October, the Government established the Journalists Support Fund for the purpose of helping journalists and bereaved families of media workers. Journalists and media workers continued to face intimidation, harassment and violence by anti-government elements and pro-government forces. UNAMA documented four incidents involving killing, beating and two threats against journalists.

## IV. Coordination of development assistance

43. Preparations for the Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan of 28 November accelerated with reference to key deliverables, including holding parliamentary elections, finalizing all national priority programmes, achieving International Monetary Fund benchmarks, promoting private sector growth, making progress on anti-corruption and advancing security sector reform. On 23 September, a preparatory meeting was held in New York, co-chaired by Minister Rabbani and my Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA. On 8 November, a senior officials' meeting was held in Geneva, where discussions focused on the Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework to be adopted at the Conference and Afghanistan's economic growth strategy.

44. During the reporting period, President Ghani's team revised its anti-corruption strategy, adding 52 new benchmarks while eliminating others. The Government expanded the anti-corruption legal framework, recording progress on key pieces of legislation. In September, the working group on criminal law reform finalized draft laws on anti-corruption and whistle-blowing. On 9 October, the Government submitted its draft anti-corruption law to the National Assembly for review. The new law incorporates recommendations from the UNAMA anti-corruption report of 2018, including the codification of the legal basis for the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre and the establishment of a stand-alone anti-corruption commission. However, civil society organizations expressed concern that the proposed selection process for the commission was insufficiently independent. On 11 October, the draft whistle-blower protection law was submitted to the National Assembly. On 5 November, the National Assembly approved the Law on Declaration and Registration of Assets of State Officials and Employees, which had been adopted by presidential decree in November 2017. According to the Assets Registration Administration, more than 16,000 asset declaration forms have been registered, including 73 from members of the Upper and Lower Houses of the National Assembly.

45. On 26 September, the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre convicted six high-ranking officials from the Ministry of the Interior, including a former general and a former Deputy Minister, of corruption-related offences. Three other former officials of the Ministry were found guilty and sentenced to imprisonment on 9 October. Since September 2018, the Centre has finalized three trials involving 16 defendants at the primary level and two cases involving seven defendants at the appeals court level, representing a gradual decline in the number of cases compared with previous periods. Judges and prosecutors from the Centre cite the lack of enforcement of summonses and arrest warrants as the main reason for the decline. In total, the Centre has finalized 47 trials involving 169 defendants and 41 cases involving 128 defendants on appeal.

46. Efforts to implement merit-based recruitment in the public sector continued. In August, the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission reported that based on its provincial assessments, it had identified 2,533 senior provincial line directorate positions, of which 1,362 were occupied by acting directors, while other positions were vacant. As a result, 114 high-level provincial line directorate positions were opened up for competitive recruitment, and 158 applicants sat a new standardized written exam for 35 senior provincial directorate positions, administered by the newly established Exam Centre of the Commission.

47. The Government continued reforms to improve accountability in the security sector, with a focus on the Ministry of the Interior. On 30 August, the Government completed the personnel asset inventory for existing Afghan National Police personnel, with the process to continue for new recruits. Further, the Government completed the verification of personnel asset inventory records against the

Web-enabled payroll system. Out of 147,875 records, 106,189 personnel were identified as legitimate for the payment of salaries. The remaining 41,686 records were removed from the payroll for such reasons as retirement, desertion and attrition. The Government continued reforms to its security leadership under the Inherent Law. On 1 October, the Ministry of Defence announced a third tranche of retirements from the Afghan National Army under the Law, comprising an additional 22 generals. In total, some 1,800 Afghan National Army personnel, including 380 generals, have been retired since the Inherent Law was decreed in November 2017.

45. The Government continued its efforts to promote private sector growth. On 8 October, the Council of Ministers endorsed Afghanistan's first national trade policy, which is aimed at enhancing export competitiveness and implementing the commitments resulting from the accession of Afghanistan to the World Trade Organization in June 2016. On 31 October, the World Bank announced that Afghanistan had risen 16 places in its global ease of doing business rankings, bringing the country's ranking to 167 out of 190. The Bank highlighted reforms, including reductions in the cost of starting a business and the adoption of a new tax administration as factors behind the improved ranking.

## V. Humanitarian assistance and refugees

46. Between 16 August and 31 October, 38,558 people were newly displaced by the conflict, bringing the total number of displaced persons to 289,866 in 2018 (60,720 women, 167,342 children and 61,804 men). Although conflict-related displacement is down by more than two thirds compared with the same period in 2017, many displaced families continue to have no immediate prospect of returning to their areas of origin in safety and dignity. During the reporting period, humanitarian partners provided food and other life-saving assistance to 165,759 people displaced by conflict.

47. The number of trauma cases that received treatment in the period from 16 August to 31 October was 34,242, an increase of 21 per cent compared with 2017. The need for trauma care was especially high in Helmand, Kunduz, Takhar, Ghazni, Kunar, Zabul and Kabul Provinces, where clashes took heavy tolls. During the reporting period, the 15 partners of the health cluster provided consultations to 897,353 people, of whom 53.4 per cent were women and girls.

48. After the crisis in Ghazni in August, the United Nations deployed teams to remove 106 explosive remnants of war that posed a threat to community safety and security. The teams provided risk education to more than 8,000 people. From January to September 2018, the teams visited 188 communities, removing 1,611 explosive remnants of war, surveying hazardous areas and providing risk education, cumulatively reducing the risk of death and injury to approximately 810,239 individuals. Over the same period, the United Nations and partners cleared 4.9 square kilometres of high-impact explosive contamination, benefiting 67 communities. Responding to the protection concerns of returnees from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran, approximately 180,304 people have received risk education at centres across the country.

49. In recognition of the global role of Afghanistan in mine action, the Government presided over the 17th meeting of the States parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, held from 26 to 30 November in Geneva.

50. During the reporting period, eight new cases of polio were confirmed, bringing the total number of cases in 2018 to 19. The epicentre of the ongoing outbreak, Kandahar, accounts for 9 of the 19 cases. Owing to a ban on house-to-house

vaccination in the southern provinces (Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan), since May 2018, 846,000 children have not been vaccinated. With an additional 200,000 children in Ghazni not reached, the total number of children not vaccinated in the eastern and southern regions during the reporting period was approximately 1 million. The Ministry of Public Health and the United Nations developed contingency plans using other approaches to reach those children with vaccines.

51. As at 31 October, drought had affected 229 out of 401 districts across the country. In western Afghanistan, more than 250,000 people have now been forced from rural areas to urban centres since the beginning of the year. Most of the newly displaced people live in informal settlements with few, if any, basic social services. Many rural communities have depleted their assets, selling off livestock to buy food and consuming the coming planting season's seeds. According to the United Nations, 3.5 million people are severely food insecure as a result of the drought and in need of life-saving food and livelihood assistance. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification analysis conducted in October, 10.8 million people are at emergency or crisis levels of food insecurity.

52. The United Nations and partners are working to enable communities to cultivate crops for the 2019 harvest and supporting those who have already been forced to leave their homes. Families displaced to urban centres by drought received the same emergency food assistance as people displaced by conflict. Food was provided to families in rural areas to prevent further drought-related displacement. By October, the United Nations and its partners had distributed food assistance to 706,000 people in the worst-affected provinces of Badghis, Faryab, Ghor, Herat and Jowzjan.

53. In October, the United Nations and partners began to expand support for at least six months to all of the estimated 3.5 million people in need in 20 provinces owing to drought. The United Nations distributed assistance to more than 1 million people in October and is on course to reach 2.5 million before the end of the year, while partners are to reach the remaining 1 million people. In addition, work has been initiated to reach 1.4 million people before winter with concentrated animal feed, fodder seed and wheat seed in 21 provinces. The Government has mobilized 60,000 tons of wheat grain from its own reserves. The United Nations has transported 30,000 tons to date and is procuring complementary commodities from international markets.

54. A total of 110,954 Afghan citizens, including spontaneous returnees, deportees and refugees, returned to Afghanistan during the reporting period. From 16 August to 31 October, 4,400 undocumented returnees arrived from Pakistan and 103,146 from the Islamic Republic of Iran. In the same period, the United Nations assisted in the return of 2,692 refugees from Pakistan, 694 from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 22 from other countries. The number of registered refugees returning to Afghanistan is significantly lower than in 2017 (10,596 from Pakistan, 419 from the Islamic Republic of Iran and 68 from other countries). The number of undocumented returns from the Islamic Republic of Iran has soared, with more than 602,524 returnees and deportees in 2018 (January to September) compared with 382,003 in 2017 (January to September), in an apparent response to the worsening economic situation in the country. Humanitarian agencies are trying to reach returnees and provide them with a package of food, cash and other basic necessities to facilitate their reintegration. In October, the Government of Pakistan extended proof of registration cards for some 1.4 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan until 30 June 2019.

55. Constraints on humanitarian access continued, with a total of 69 incidents affecting the United Nations and partners from 16 August to 31 October. Since the beginning of the year, a total of 318 incidents have been recorded, including the killings of 26 aid workers. Moreover, 48 aid workers were injured, 76 were abducted and 46 were detained. Deminers continue to face a risk of kidnapping and armed

violence. Humanitarian access in contested areas and areas under the control of anti-government elements remained a persistent challenge. In October, the Taliban renewed its guarantees for the safe passage of staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross, two months after it had been withdrawn. The Committee subsequently welcomed the renewal of its security guarantee.

56. As at 31 October, humanitarian activities in Afghanistan had received $312.8 million in funding, including $248.2 million for activities included in the humanitarian response plan.

## VI. Counter-narcotics

57. The Government, supported by international partners, continued its counter-narcotics operations. From 16 August to 31 October, law enforcement authorities conducted a total of 835 operations leading to seizures of 2,646 kg of heroin, 9,060 kg of morphine, 12,578 kg of opium, 941 kg of methamphetamine, 4,040 kg of hashish, 16,256 kg of cannabis, 11,787 tablets of 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), 4,417 kg of solid precursor chemicals and 14,344 litres of liquid precursor chemicals. In total, eight heroin manufacturing laboratories were dismantled; 1,017 suspects were arrested; and 86 vehicles, 140 weapons, 341 mobile telephones and five radios were seized. One officer of the Afghan Counter-Narcotics Police was killed while carrying out operations.

58. The 2018 report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan was finalized and released in November. Its findings show a moderate decrease in opium cultivation and production compared with 2017, with significant decreases in cultivation and production noted in the northern and western regions owing to the drought. In a joint initiative by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, the Ministry of Counter Narcotics and UNODC, a two-day national conference on the role of agricultural extension in the promotion of alternative development in Afghanistan was held on 1 and 2 October in Kabul City. The event was attended by 150 farmers and extension workers and showcased agricultural inputs and technological advances by the private sector, as well marketing opportunities for crop and livestock products.

## VII. Mission support

59. As at 31 October, the Mission's vacancy rates were 7 per cent for international staff, 5 per cent for National Professional Officers and 3 per cent for local-level staff, compared with the approved rates of 11.1 per cent, 8.5 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively. The proportion of female staff remained very low. As at 31 October, the percentage of women in each category of staff stood at 36 per cent for international staff, 37 per cent for United Nations Volunteers, 13 per cent for National Professional Officers and 7 per cent for local-level staff. Between 1 August and 31 October, UNAMA conducted 197 road and 23 air missions, as well as 1,004 reverse outreach missions, during which district representatives visited UNAMA field offices.

## VIII. Observations

60. Noting the many security, logistical and political challenges facing the electoral management bodies of Afghanistan, I welcome the timely conduct of parliamentary elections under difficult circumstances. The elections once again demonstrated the commitment of Afghan citizens to participating in democratic processes. I am heartened by the courage and determination shown by the millions of Afghan women

and men who turned out to vote across the country, often overcoming significant obstacles and defying serious security threats to elect their representatives. I condemn the deliberate acts of violence against civilians perpetrated by anti-government elements throughout the electoral process, including the spike in attacks against electoral and related targets on 20 October, which resulted in the highest number of civilian casualties recorded on a single day in 2018. Apart from inflicting serious harm on civilians, such violence represents a clear attack on the constitutional right of Afghan citizens to political participation. Recalling the stated commitment of the Taliban to protect civilians in armed conflict, I call upon all parties to respect the right of Afghans to participate in all stages of the electoral process freely and without fear or threat of violence.

61. At the same time, it must also be acknowledged that the elections and their aftermath were marred by technical shortcomings, some of them preventable and some resulting from an overstretched Independent Electoral Commission. Delays in opening polling centres, problems associated with the late introduction of biometric voter verification and administrative errors in voter lists led to serious delays on election day, causing some voters to turn away without casting their ballots. These frustrations, together with delays in vote counting and tabulation since the elections, have weakened the credibility of the country's electoral institutions at a critical moment in the electoral cycle. I call upon the electoral management bodies to safeguard the transparency of the process during the post-election phase as a first step towards regaining the confidence of the Afghan people, including by providing clear information on all aspects of the process. Recalling that the elections could not be held in Ghazni Province, I encourage the Government and the Independent Election Commission to give due priority to resolving outstanding security, political and logistical issues to enable the people of Ghazni to elect their parliamentary representatives. For the rest of the provinces, the Independent Election Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission must do everything possible to accelerate the process of vote counting and tabulation of results in a credible, transparent and timely manner.

62. With the approach of the presidential elections in April 2019, I encourage the electoral management bodies to take appropriate measures based on lessons learned from the parliamentary elections to ensure coherent decision-making and the timely implementation of all necessary procedures. Equally, it is imperative that all political stakeholders assume responsibility for the electoral process. The blocking by political parties of the offices of the Independent Election Commission prior to the elections in order to force the introduction of biometric technology led to serious delays in the completion of key preparatory activities. The late accession by the Government to the demand for biometrics overloaded the Commission's capacity in the crucial weeks before the election. While peaceful protest is the constitutional right of all Afghans, I am concerned about the use of obstructive tactics by some political parties and candidates. Such tactics can deprive other citizens of their right to vote and, if pursued systematically, threaten to undermine the electoral system. As the Government and the electoral management bodies continue preparations for the presidential elections, I call upon all stakeholders, including candidates, political parties and civil society organizations, to engage constructively in all aspects of the electoral process. Only through the sincere and united efforts of the leaders and institutions of Afghanistan will its citizens be granted the opportunity to vote in elections worthy of their participation, with guarantees that their votes will be respected.

63. I am deeply concerned about the worsening impact of the armed conflict on the civilian population, as UNAMA continues to document record-high numbers of civilian deaths. While efforts on the battlefield have led to some reductions in civilian casualties from ground engagements, the continued rise in civilian casualties from

suicide and aerial attacks is worrying. Of the utmost concern is the increased targeting of civilians by anti-government elements, exemplified by the violence directed at the Afghan population participating in the electoral processes. I urge parties to the conflict to respect their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law and anti-government elements to cease all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure.

64. The high and rising cost of the conflict in civilian lives is a stark reminder that ending the conflict through peace negotiations must remain the foremost imperative guiding all efforts in Afghanistan. In keeping with the principle of Afghan ownership, I encourage the Government to strengthen the inclusivity of the peace process, ensuring that a diverse range of views is taken into account at every stage. Noting the recent expansion in contact between the Taliban and members of the international community, I underline the necessity for the Taliban to engage in direct talks with the Government of Afghanistan with a view to reaching a solution to the conflict. The United Nations stands ready to support all peace efforts through any available means.

65. I remain deeply concerned about the prevalence of violence against women and girls in Afghanistan. Such violence causes profound human suffering, inflicts grave harm on families and inhibits the full participation of women in public life. In this light, the establishment by the Government of a technical committee to review the Elimination of Violence against Women Law of 2009 is an encouraging step. I am optimistic that the review will result in stronger and rights-based legal protection from violence for all Afghan women and girls.

66. Humanitarian, health and education workers continue to face unacceptable risks as they undertake critical tasks across Afghanistan. I am deeply concerned about the increase in attacks against health facilities and health-care personnel, as well as attacks against school facilities and disruptions to the educational process. Such attacks and activities are unjustifiable under any circumstances. I urge parties to the conflict to take measures to allow health facilities to function without interruption and to respect the right to education for both boys and girls without interference. Similarly, the recent spate of efforts by anti-government elements to hinder humanitarian demining operations, including through threats and intimidation against and the kidnapping of deminers, have delayed and derailed life-saving projects. All parties must allow humanitarian demining teams unimpeded access to affected areas.

67. Notwithstanding the volatile environment, Afghanistan made progress in the past year in improving the investment climate, moving from 183 to 167 in the ease of doing business rankings of the World Bank. A first for Afghanistan, this climb puts the country among the top improvers globally. This commendable result signals progress towards the goals of the Transformation Decade (2015–2024), including generating economic growth to achieve self-reliance. The revision of the anti-corruption strategy provides a valuable opportunity for the Government to clarify the institutional framework guiding anti-corruption efforts, in line with the commitments of Afghanistan under the United Nations Convention against Corruption. I encourage the Government to continue its constructive engagement with civil society organizations and international partners throughout the process.

68. At the ministerial conference on Afghanistan held on 27 and 28 November in Geneva, the international community demonstrated its continued commitment to Afghanistan, and discussions were focused on the Government's reform agenda. As noted at the Conference, the Government has made progress on key elements of this agenda, including the finalization of 10 national priority programmes, the implementation of far-reaching fiscal reforms and the promotion of the participation of women in public life. In other areas, progress remained limited. I welcome the adoption of the Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework by Afghanistan and

international donors. The Framework provides a clear road map for mutually agreed reform priorities over the next two years, in alignment with the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework. The United Nations will continue to provide coherent support to the Government as it implements its reform agenda for the benefit of all citizens, with a view to achieving peace, development and self-reliance during the Transformation Decade.

69. I thank all the United Nations personnel in Afghanistan and my Special Representative, Tadamichi Yamamoto, for their continued dedication under challenging conditions to fulfilling our commitments in support of the people of Afghanistan.